MEN OF POWER

FRED EASTMAN

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MEN OF POWER

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By FRED EASTMAN

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The subjects for Vols. III, IV, and V are tentative

MEN OF POWER

VOL. II

SIXTY-MINUTE BIOGRAPHIES

FRANCIS OF ASSISI
LEONARDO DA VINCI
OLIVER CROMWELL
JOHN MILTON

By
FRED EASTMAN

Professor of Biography, Literature, and Drama
at The Chicago Theological Seminary

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"THERE ARE A FEW CHARACTERS WHICH HAVE STOOD THE CLOSEST SCRUTINY AND THE SEVEREST TESTS, WHICH HAVE BEEN TRIED IN THE FURNACE AND HAVE PROVED PURE, WHICH HAVE BEEN WEIGHED IN THE BALANCE AND HAVE NOT BEEN FOUND WANTING, WHICH HAVE BEEN DECLARED STERLING BY THE GENERAL CONSENT OF MANKIND."

LORD MACAULAY,
in *Critical and Historical Essays*

Hamlin
Hamlin 1838 1.38 P.C.P.

FOREWORD

I shall try to *explain* these men, not expose or glorify them. They all had power. Where did they get it? They accomplished great things for the common good. Why? Together with the men in the four other volumes in this series they bequeathed to us no small part of our social, scientific, political, and spiritual heritage. How? To paraphrase Shakespeare's line,

> The cause, dear reader, was not in their stars,
> But in themselves, that they were men of power.

In these studies I hope to discover the influences that operated to lift these men above the level of the commonplace and to set their feet on higher ground. I shall present each man's heredity, his cultural and national background, his early home and school, his friendships, his purposes, his habits of work, his opponents, and his philosophy of life. From these considerations it may be possible to construct an understandable picture of his growing personality. Such biographical portraits will give more attention to each man's early struggles than to his later accomplishments, more importance to what went on within his heart as a youth and young man than to the honors that came to him as an old man.

Gratefully I acknowledge the constructive criticism of my wife, whose passion for accuracy has saved me from many a slip and whose encouragement has kept me at the task. My thanks also to my young colleagues, Louis Wilson, Kendrick Grobel, and Leland Carlson, for their assistance in preparing the sketches in this volume.

F. E.

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MEN OF POWER

FRANCIS OF ASSISI

1182 - 1226

POVERTY, humility, love, and joy—add them together, and the result is Francis of Assisi. Set them over against wealth, pride, hatred, and fear—and you have the conflict between Francis and his times. And since that conflict is a never-ending one, men and women in the midst of it in any age look back to Francis as one who demonstrated that poverty, humility, love, and joy can be victorious.

His Times. We can never understand him until we understand the background against which he lived. All the political and economic ferment of the twelfth century came to a head in Italy about the time of Francis. Though more unified than any other portion of Europe, Italy was not a nation, but a collection of independent city states, each governed by its own feudal lord. These feudal lords were incessantly at war with one another. Assisi, where Francis was born, was never free from fear of attack by the neighboring city of Perugia. The serfs who tilled the land around Assisi had always to

keep within the protection of their city's garrison. Moreover, across the central part of Italy stretched the feudal domain of the Popes of Rome—Peter's Patrimony—while between the Papal Court at Rome and the Imperial Court at Germany, warfare, actual or diplomatic, went on unceasingly.

Assisi itself was frequently devastated by these wars. Famine and pestilence, including leprosy, were no strangers within her gates. The poor felt the whips of hunger and disease. After one war the city was reduced to the desperate straits of the slave block. Women and even children four or five years old were sold in the marketplace.

In spite of all this strife, manufacturing and trading increased. Traders journeyed from city to city and into other countries. Their travels excited their curiosity. They wanted to learn more about the world. Romance flowered in chivalry and was celebrated in legend and song by wandering troubadours. The individual began to emerge from the mass with a mind of his own, and here and there *conscience* began to raise questions about duties and rights and the destiny of man.

The State of the Church. More important even than the economic and political turmoil of the times was the condition of the church. It was a strange mixture of good and evil. On the good side, it had kept civilization alive, nourished the arts, fostered learning, lifted men out of their perverted nature-worship and taught

them something at least of the life of Christ. It had attempted to unite all Europe in a Holy Roman Empire in which every man's allegiance—whether he were king or lord or serf—would be first to God.

But the evil side was black enough to offset much of the good. The church had become as entwined with the feudal order as the Russian Church of 1900 with the old czarist regime. The power and the authority of the church of the thirteenth century were eagerly solicited by kings and emperors in alliance against the growing power of their vassal nobility. Bishops and priests marched hand-in-glove with the lords and shared both their privileges and their vices. As a class, they were aligned with the wealthy against the poor. Church offices, because of the privileges they carried with them, came to be political posts and were sold to the highest bidder. Bishops demanded more and more money from the priests, and the priests, in turn, more and more from the poor. How the priests obtained the money was of secondary importance. Some bishops counted among their recognized revenues an item called the "collagium," the payment of which gave permission to the priest to keep a concubine. Such a priest would then extort more money from the people in order to support the woman and his illegitimate children.

Why did the people tolerate such iniquity? Only because they believed that the church held the keys of heaven and hell. Priests and bishops cultivated this belief. In general, there are two kinds of religion: the

one directed toward God and the next world; the other directed toward man and the effort to transform this world. The first tends to go to seed in ritual and magic; the second tends toward a larger and larger social ethic. The church of the thirteenth century belonged clearly to the first class. The minds of the people were filled with superstitions about devils and the miraculous power of the saints to preserve human beings from demoniac clutches. The church preyed upon those superstitions. To use a bit of modern slang, it "cashed in" on them. And the cash went to keep the bishops in luxuries. High above the miserable dwellings of the poor stood "the rich Benedictine Abbeys, veritable fortresses set upon the hilltops."

Even in its worst days there were some spiritual leaders in the church who knew that all this wickedness was treason to the gospel of Christ. Such leaders revolted from the church and tried in different ways to return to the simplicity and spirituality of Apostolic Christianity. They were branded as heretics. Among these were the "Poor Men of Lyons." These men denied the efficacy of the sacraments when administered by clergy who were not Christian in their private lives. Although at first approved by Rome, they were later disowned by the church and persecuted. Another group of heretics were those known as the Cathari. They advocated learning, renounced marriage and the ownership of property, and approved suicide as a means of escape from the evils of the world.

Many a papal bull of the times reflects the protests of these and of sensitive laymen who had lost all respect for the clergy. The latter were not subject to arrest or prosecution by civil authorities, so the protestors had to appeal directly to the Pope. The very fact that numerous papal bulls refer to clerics who committed incest, adultery, and assassination confirms the extent of the demoralization of the priests and bishops. But papal censure was not enough to cure this sickness. Something more drastic was necessary—as drastic as a living sacrifice. It was that sacrifice that Francis was to make. He, more than any other man, saved Christianity from the deadly corruption of the church of the thirteenth century.

The Parents and Home of Francis. He was born in or about 1182. His father was a wealthy cloth merchant named Pietro Bernardone who kept a store in Assisi, which then had a population of four or five thousand. Pietro also traveled extensively in France, taking with him a regular caravan of wagons and pack animals bearing cloth for the families of the feudal lords. Such a merchant was more than a salesman: he was the newspaper and magazine of the times, carrying news of wars and plagues, of politics and crops, of heresies and rebellions. Although not received as a social equal of the nobility, he was yet accorded high standing. In many respects he was a banker, and his wagons often carried the money levied by the popes upon the people in France and other countries. While

he was absent from Assisi on one such journey, his wife, Pica, bore him a son and had him baptized under the name of John. When Pietro returned he had the boy rechristened as Francesco.

The incident is typical of the relations between Pietro and Pica. Pica, quiet, gentle, devout, submissive, impressed her personality upon Francis only so far as the appeal of kindliness might do so. Pietro was master. That he loved Francis there can be no doubt; that he was wise in his love is another matter. Like the other new capitalists of his day, his chief ambition was for more wealth, more success. He wanted Francis to climb higher than he had climbed—and on the same ladder. He taught the lad to speak the French language and to compose gay French songs. He implanted in the growing mind a love of the romantic and with it a desire to excel—to excel in business, in revels, in soldiering, in dress, in all things that belonged to the life of a young gentleman of the age. But Pietro was absent usually in body and always in understanding when the boy had to face the inevitable decisions of youth. Then it was Pica who counseled him, only to have her counsels upset and reversed when Pietro returned. Between these two opposite temperaments the soul of young Francis gradually took shape. There were other children in the family, but we know nothing of them. Francis stood out from the beginning. He had his mother's gentleness and his father's ambition to excel.

To excel—that is the key to an understanding of the early character of Francis. He sought to excel first in games, then in making money, then in soldiering, then—after he had found the emptiness of these—to excel in love, in charity, and in good works. We can see this development at various stages in a series of scenes from his life.

Boyhood and Youth. We see him first as a lad in his early teens. School is out (it was but a poor excuse for a school, taught by a priest who gave his pupils only the rudiments of Latin and of reading and writing) and the children are forming a procession to follow young Francis. He is the gayest of the lot, his clothes the brightest, his laughter the most contagious. He leads them up and down the narrow streets, over pavements grooved centuries before by the chariot wheels of the Caesars and of Charlemagne. This procession starts out in imitation of one of those of the clergy, but by and by the children turn it into an imitation of the marching of soldiers. Francis' father, with a lavish hand, has provided him with plenty of costumes, and the boy is never miserly about sharing them with his poorer neighbors. As evening draws on, the children bring their procession to one of the many open squares about a fountain. There until dark they sing and dance. After their evening meal the young people return to the square and hold a "Court of Love." This is a combination of pageantry, song, and romance quite popular at the time. Such courts attracted the

young gallants and by a "blend of swagger and courtly grace, quickened with touches of poetry, gave a pleasant veneer to the new code of chivalry." Here, too, Francis takes the lead, for he has social gifts above the average and some talent as an actor.

These courts of love sometimes turn into revels far from innocent. Thomas of Celano, the earliest of the biographers of Francis, says that the parents of these days, especially in periods of extreme poverty, often incited their children to vice for the sake of the few coins that might be thus gained. Francis is no stranger to the follies of the times. He leads many an escapade that turns into dissipation. Late into the night he and his companions keep the town ringing with their noisy songs and merry-making. When other mothers tell the gentle Pica of her son's latest doings, she replies calmly, "What are you thinking about? I am very sure that when it pleases God he will become a good Christian." Although later biographers of Francis insist that he kept himself unspotted from the world, the ones nearest his own day do not try to gloss over his early profligacy. They insist that he so tried to excel the other young men of his age in pranks and prodigalities that he achieved a sort of celebrity.

We see him again about the age of eighteen in his father's shop. His own popularity has increased business for his father, and Francis has learned how to conduct the store profitably in his father's long ab-

sences. On this particular day Francis is busy with customers when a ragged old man enters and begs charity in the name of God. Francis angrily orders him out of the door. Then in one of his impetuous changes he reproaches himself: "What would I not have done if this man had asked something of me in the name of a count or a baron? What ought I to have done when he came in the name of God? I am no better than a clown!" Thereupon he leaves the shop and runs after the beggar to make amends. What has happened in the heart of Francis to account for this sudden burst of self-reproach? Has his father told him of the "Poor Men of Lyons" who were living and preaching in France a new Way of Life? Has his mother been quietly instilling into his spirit her gentle sympathy? Possibly one or both. We do not know, but all the biographers relate the incident.

In Prison. Two years pass. We find him now in prison. Assisi has been the scene of war in the meantime. It was civil war, the burghers against their feudal lord, the Duke of Spoleto, and his nobles. Taking advantage of the Duke's absence on a journey to try to secure the favor of the new Pope, Innocent III, the burghers had rushed upon the castle and demolished it, leaving not one stone upon another. They had then attempted to take over the property of the nobles. The latter had appealed to the neighboring city of Perugia, which promptly sent an army against Assisi. The battle was fought on the plain between

the two cities. The Assisans were defeated and Francis, with many others, taken prisoner. But in prison he is still gay, and his songs entrance his keepers so that they make his lot as easy as possible for him. Often they think him crazy, for, like the biblical Joseph, he has dreams of his own grandeur, and he doesn't hesitate to relate them, ending usually with the saying: "You will see that one day I shall be adored by the whole world." The important fact about his imprisonment, however, is that it has come about not through any of his earlier misconduct, but because he has been fighting on the side of the common people and against the nobles whom, a little before, he loved to imitate.

Early Struggles. Francis is twenty-one when he is released from prison. He plunges again into the dissipations in which he had found excitement before the war. He plunges with such violence that he soon falls desperately ill. "For long weeks," says Sabatier, "he looked death so closely in the face that the physical crisis brought about a moral one." One spring morning when he is convalescing he walks slowly and tremblingly out of the city gate to look once more upon the beautiful Umbrian Valley with its quiet farms and villages, woods and orchards, in the hope that the soft breezes will chase the fever from his body and let him feel once again the delicious sensations of youth. Instead, as he looks out across the valley, he feels within him a deeper pain than he has ever known before. It is the pain of disgust with his own life and its empti-

ness. He sees his former attempts to excel in the revels as stupid folly, his excesses as thieves of his self-respect. Revulsion fills him with a certain terror of the miserable futility of his life thus far. Probably for the first time he feels himself utterly alone—"that solitude of a great soul in whom there is no altar." Wearily he makes his way back to his home, sick in soul as well as in body. If he is to excel, it must be along some new road; the way of pleasure has proved to be only a blind alley.

Yet, when he has finally recovered, he knows no other way of life than the one he has always led. Soon, however, a way of escape presents itself, and he seizes it with ardor. It is the opportunity to go with a certain knight who is to join Gaultier de Brienne, a great hero of those days, and fight with him for Pope Innocent III. Here is something worth living for. To excel as a soldier—surely that will be far better than to excel in dissipation. He will go. With intense and joyous enthusiasm he prepares for the expedition. No other soldier or squire has half so fine an equipment, either in clothes or weapons. The people of Assisi are accustomed to the extravagant expenditures of wealthy Pietro Bernardone's son—but these exceed anything he has done before and they are the talk of the town. Clad in his brilliant uniform, he dashes about from house to shop and from shop to garrison, making ready for the journey. Finally the morning comes, and the little troop rides out from the city gate, banners flying. A few days later, Francis, bedraggled

and dispirited, comes back to Assisi. Exactly what has taken place, we do not know. In all probability he has been hazed by the other members of the party. Soldiers, like other human beings, can stand just so much finery and boastful talk in a young comrade. After that, when the opportunity offers, they "initiate" him—strip him of his finery and subject him to as much personal indignity as the fertility of their imaginations can conceive. At any rate, Francis' hopes for military glory have gone up like a skyrocket—and come down like the stick.

We know little of his life during the next two years. His father regards him as a bad investment and something of a disgrace. An estrangement begins to grow up between them. Francis has no one to whom he can turn to help him resolve the conflicts in his heart. The old feeling of the emptiness and futility of his life returns. He goes on long walks into the country and especially to a certain cave in the mountainside. There, hour after hour, in solitude, he tries to think through the meaning of existence. In anguish of spirit he prays, and his prayers are punctuated with groans as he confesses his failure. But even his prayers bring him as yet no peace.

Occasionally his old friends persuade him to join them in their "courts of love" and other dissipations, but he finds no satisfaction. One evening when he has given a banquet to the young gallants of Assisi and they have hailed his return to them by crowning

him "king of the revels," they suddenly discover that he is missing. They search for him and find him in a profound reverie, although he still wears their crown. With jests and laughter they attempt to pull him back to their gaiety, and demand to know what is the matter with him. Is he in love? Is he thinking of taking a wife? "Yes," he replies, "I am thinking of taking a wife—more beautiful, more rich, more pure than any you have ever known."

Choosing Poverty as His Bride. This reply marks the beginning of a new epoch in his inner life. He is through forever with all the trivial pleasures of dissipation. He is beginning to see his way, even though it is not yet entirely clear. After this night he spends even more of his days in solitary meditation. His gay friends desert him, feeling the abyss widening between them. Yet he is not alone. The poor of Assisi are still loyal to him. In the days when his father had provided him with plenty of money he had not withheld it from the destitute. He had thought then that it was only his money that could be of use to them. He discovers now that he has something better than money to share with them: understanding. His own inner suffering binds them to him with cords of sympathy.

Now begins a new adventure. Can it be that in the companionship of the poor he can find the inner satisfaction that he has missed among the pleasures of the rich? The idea seems absurd, but it will not let him alone. By some intuition he senses that it has its root

somewhere in the Christian tradition. So he makes a pilgrimage to Rome and to the tomb of Saint Peter. Arriving at the tomb, he is astonished to see the meagerness of the offerings of other pilgrims, many of them far richer than he. Impulsively he empties his entire purse upon the tomb, gives his rich clothing to a beggar in exchange for the beggar's rags, and for a whole day stands among the other beggars, hands outstretched to the passing crowds. It is his first brief taste of poverty.

Some days later, Francis, back in Assisi, is riding along a narrow path when suddenly he meets a leper. Fastidious by nature, he turns his horse about and rides quickly away from the loathsome sight of this wretched victim of the world's cruelest disease. But now a great sense of shame overpowers him. Dismounting from his horse and summoning his resolution, he goes back to the leper, greets him with a gentle salutation, gives him money, and then humbly kneels and kisses his hand. This conquest of himself gives him a new sense of confidence. Not far away there is a colony of these lepers. He thinks about them and their misery, to which neither man nor church is ministering. After a few days he goes to their colony. There he finds human need in its direst and most repulsive guise. But as he brings food to these unfortunates, washes their wounds and talks with them, he finds his own heart kindled by their gratitude. Never before has anyone so treated them. Their tongues can find no words, but

their tears speak eloquently. The gate to the leper colony has opened before Francis a new way of life—a way of courage, but also a way of more peace and inner satisfaction than he has ever known. Now, as Laurence Housman puts it, "all the griefs and miseries of the world lay open to him; sorrow made way for joy; and in reaching to succour the lowest of God's creatures he finds his hands resting confidently upon the feet of Christ."

Not far from Assisi stands the little chapel of St. Damian. The building is crumbling away from neglect. It is served by a lone priest whose income is scarcely sufficient to keep him alive. This solitary shrine becomes the favorite resort of Francis in these weeks of deep longing for guidance. One day as he is kneeling before the altar there he prays, "Shed thy light, I beseech thee, into the darkness of my mind; and so be found in me that I may do all things according to thy holy will." He lifts his eyes to the figure on the crucifix. The face of the Christ on this particular crucifix is not one of the usual ascetic variety so frequently seen in Catholic countries. It is rather a face of great tenderness and human appeal. On this occasion the eyes seem to look directly into those of Francis, and he thinks he hears the voice of Christ saying to him: "Francis, build my church." Always an exceedingly literal and practical person, Francis looks about this chapel and notes its crumbling stones. Yes, he will build the church and he will begin right here.

He hurries back to Assisi, loads his horse with a bale of cloth, and rides away with it to a nearby fair. Arriving there, he sells both horse and goods, journeys back on foot to St. Damian's, and turns over all the money to the astonished priest for the rebuilding of the chapel. The priest refuses to accept so large a gift, knowing well how Francis' father would later object. But he consents to allow Francis to remain with him for a while, and together they work with their own hands to rebuild the shrine. Francis tosses the money into a hiding place in the chapel.

Final Break with the Old Life. Not long afterward, his father, suspicious of his son's strange conduct and his failure to return home, traces his movements and appears in the little chapel with a band of neighbors. Angrily he demands that his son return home for punishment. But Francis escapes and for six weeks remains in hiding, hoping that his father's anger will cool. Then, growing ashamed of his cowardice, he makes his way, unshaven and clad like a beggar, down to Assisi. He no sooner enters the town than the children, who have heard their elders gossiping about these strange events, surround him with cries of "Mad man! Mad man!" His father's anger boils up again at the sight of this fresh disgrace to the family of Bernardone. Running into the street, he seizes Francis, beats him, and drags him into his home where he locks him in a closet until he shall come to his senses. Shortly thereafter, however, the elder Bernardone is

called out of town by business matters, and Pica, no longer able to bear her son's sufferings, sets him free —an act for which her husband strikes her when he returns home.

Francis returns to the chapel of St. Damian and to his labor of rebuilding. Pietro follows him there and demands that he get out of the country. This Francis refuses to do, boldly affirming his new mission and insisting that he is now the servant of Christ and no longer under his father's authority. He gives back the money from the sale of the horse and cloth, but himself he will not give back. He is committed to a new Master.

When next we see Francis he is standing in the court-room of the Bishop of Assisi. There his father has haled him for the purpose of having him disinherited for unfilial conduct. It is the hour of the trial, and the neighbors of Assisi are all there to see the excitement. Pietro makes the accusation before the Bishop. Francis, instead of replying, asks to be excused from the room for a few minutes. His request is granted amid a buzz of wonderment among the spectators. A few moments later Francis returns, now stark naked and carrying his clothing rolled in a bundle. This, with what little money he has left, he places before the Bishop, saying, "Listen, all of you, and understand. Till now I have called Pietro Bernardone my father. To him, who with so much trouble gave me this money and raiment, I now return them. Henceforth, I have

no desire but to serve God and to say, 'Our Father Who art in heaven.'" Pietro gathers up the money and clothing and departs. The crowd murmurs—and in that murmuring there is a note of sympathy. Francis has broken the last of the ties that bound him to the old life.

God's Troubadour. Literally as nude as a newborn child, with neither money nor food and in the dead of winter, he begins the new life. Someone lends him a mantle, and Francis leaves the city, not knowing whither he is going. Curiously enough, he is not troubled but filled rather with elation at his new freedom. He breaks forth in song, and thus singing he meets some rough characters in the forest through which he is walking. They demand to know who he is. Whereupon Francis replies with spirit, "I am the herald of a great King; but what is that to you?" For answer they fall upon him, strip him of half his garment, and throw him into a ditch filled with snow. "Just that, poor herald!" they jibe, and make off. With some difficulty Francis extricates himself and goes on—still singing. He knows now that he can suffer the revilings and persecutions of men as Christ did. They only help him better to understand the Saviour to whom he has committed himself. No amount of outer suffering can compare with the old anguish of soul, nor can it take from him the new peace within. He is God's child now—God's troubadour. Let the songs come forth!

At a neighboring monastery he works for a new cloak to cover his body. Then he is off again, wandering over the mountains, laboring with his hands for food and shelter, and always happy. Early in the spring he is back in the leper colony, serving the needs of the poor dying men who had felt certain that they would never have such a boon as a second visit. This time Francis testifies to them concerning the richness he has found in these months of poverty.

Early in the following summer he returns to the little chapel of St. Damian. The work of repair has not been completed. He will now complete it. But he needs stones and cement. And to get them he goes into Assisi, stands in the market place or at street corners, sings until he has drawn a crowd, then begs for stones and for anything else that will help. The people know he is crazy, this son of their richest merchant, but they give. Day after day he comes back and begs, then on his own shoulders bears away the heavy stones to the chapel, until at last it is rebuilt. As the people see that the chapel—their chapel—is actually nearing completion, and that by the frail strength of one man who has kept up his cheerful songs of praise, they begin to question again. Is he so crazy after all? He has done the task he set out to do—the task no half-dozen of them would have attempted. He has lived a life of poverty and happiness in the midst of labor. He has set them an example of what one poor man could do with no other equipment than humility and love. Was

there something here to shame the proud and the mighty? Had he, after all, found a surer road to peace and happiness? Thus they wonder—and, wondering, begin to understand.

His Purpose and Message. When he has completed the rebuilding of St. Damian's Chapel, Francis takes up similar repairs on other churches in the neighborhood, particularly on a little shrine known as the Portiuncula. One day, shortly after he has finished his work on this tiny chapel, he is attending mass there. The priest reads the scripture lesson for the day—from the tenth chapter of Matthew—and as he reads Francis feels that the words are being spoken directly to him by Christ. "Wherever ye go, preach, saying: The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. Freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither silver nor gold nor brass in your purses, neither scrip nor two coats nor shoes nor staff, for the laborer is worthy of his meat." Perhaps Francis has never heard these verses before. At any rate they seem a divine confirmation of the very way of life he has so painfully been working out in his own experience. He accepts them as a divine commission to preach and to live the life of apostolic poverty and service. Straightway he leaves the church and begins to go up and down the land, preaching.

His message is very simple: Men must repent of their sins, give of their goods to the poor, and live in love for each other. Those who hear him see that

he practices what he preaches. They observe not only his sincerity, humility, and kindliness, but his abounding joy. Here is a life in striking contrast to that of the luxurious clergy and nobles and rich burghers.

Francis carries into his mission a life wholly dedicated to the Christ whom he serves. He is one of those God-intoxicated fools who first confound, then persuade the wise. When men call him a fool, he gladly admits it and rejoices that he has been made humble before the all-loving God. When men beat him, as some of them do, he praises God that he, a poor sinner, is thought worthy to share the sufferings of Christ. When he has nowhere to shelter himself from the weather, he remembers that the Son of Man had no place to lay his head. When life smiles upon him and sends him friends or sets his feet among the beauties of nature, he sings in praise of the goodness of his Creator. And day after day he preaches his gospel of repentance and the new way of life where peace is found through humility, poverty, and love. What can men do about such a person but flee from him or believe him?

He Founds His Order. Many do believe. Of these not a few give away all their possessions and join him. He is about twenty-seven years of age when he begins his itinerant lay preaching. By the time he is twenty-eight the number who have joined themselves to him as brothers under his spiritual leadership has grown to eleven. They are a motley crew. Some have

been rich, others poor. At least one is a priest. Whatever their condition, Francis requires that they give up all they possess if they are to be with him. It is this challenge of all or nothing that distinguishes the appeal of all great religious leaders.

As these eleven men go about preaching penitence and peace and sharing the life of the poor people, they meet various receptions. Sometimes they are jeered as madmen and beaten and run out of town. At other times they are welcomed and listened to with eagerness. Not infrequently they are near starvation. One day the bishop of Assisi remonstrates with Francis, saying, "Your way of living without owning anything seems to me very harsh and difficult." Francis answers: "My lord, if we possessed property we should have need of arms for its defence, for it is the source of quarrels and lawsuits, and the love of God and of one's neighbor usually finds many obstacles therein; this is why we do not desire temporal goods." A difficult argument for a bishop to answer! As the weeks pass, and the clergy see that the people are paying more attention to this little band of poor men following Francis than to the church, they begin to lay plans. Either these Franciscans must be brought within the authority of the church or they must be outlawed as heretics.

Meanwhile, Francis and his first followers are joyously continuing their mission. They work with peasants in the fields, they sleep in hay lofts or leper asy-

lums. They wear only coarse tunics, which they make with their own hands. The people call them "The Penitents of Assisi." They call themselves "The Brothers Minor," or "the little poor men," and they are always singing.

Francis now feels that their work should have the blessing of the Pope. Any brotherhood to receive such a blessing must have a written statement of its purposes and rules. So Francis copies down a few verses from the New Testament. The exact ones we do not know, but they were probably those already quoted from the tenth chapter of Matthew—the charge of Jesus to his disciples. Joyously accepting them, the friars set out for Rome. At the papal court they find to their surprise that enthusiasm for their movement is under control. Innocent III and his cardinals regard it with some suspicion. They are fearful, first, that these wandering brothers, if given full consent for their activities, may start some new heresy; second, that their preaching of gospel perfection, and especially of poverty, may so reflect upon the manner of life of many of the clergy as to weaken the hold of the church over the lives of the people. Simple-hearted Francis cannot understand why approval is withheld. Day after day he waits patiently at the papal court. Time after time he is carefully questioned. At last the Pope, unable to refuse a request to be allowed to follow the plain injunctions of the gospel and yet unconvinced as to the full wisdom of consent, gives a pro-

visional and somewhat ambiguous approval and sends Francis away with his blessing. The provision is that the brothers must choose a responsible head who in turn will be directly under the authority of the church. Further, the brothers must consider their order as a branch of the Roman Church, which now confers the tonsure upon them.

Thus the brothers who had come to Rome as laymen firmly associated in the joy of Christian love and life leave the city as an Order of the Roman Church, with Francis no longer holding his leadership among them through the bond of love alone, but as a representative of the authority conferred upon him and exercised over him by the Pope. It is the first of those steps by which in the years to come the church is completely to transform the original band of free followers of the gospel way into an ecclesiastical institution.

Whatever the later effects of the church upon this simple brotherhood the immediate result of the Pope's approval is to give it a certain authority and respectability. The Franciscans are no longer berated as "madmen." Great crowds gather to hear them, and the Brothers preach with increased zeal inspired by public approval. In Assisi itself the doors of the great cathedral, recently built by the people themselves and regarded by them as their proudest possession, are opened for Francis. There, on a great platform surrounded by hundreds, even thousands, of his fellow-citizens, he preaches his simple gospel of repentance and love.

They know this man. They know the sacrifices he has made, the sufferings he has been through, the victory he has won over himself, and the consecration he has made of his new life. It is this long spiritual experience that speaks to them even more than his words. All doubt of him has now been forgotten. They hail him as their prophet and their leader. His fire kindles their hearts and starts a flame burning throughout Italy. In the first year of his apostolate a few men had joined him. Now hundreds are ready to give up all and follow him.

Is it strange? Not when one remembers the cold and formal religious services in which the people had been receiving stones instead of the spiritual bread they craved. Not when one compares the warm and vital common speech of Francis with the scholastic and obscurantist sermons of the clergy. Not when one understands the stark completeness of the commitment of the friars to the life of the Spirit in a world which had been following the life of the flesh and finding in it only defeat and degradation.

The friars, during the first year, had lived in an old stable temporarily abandoned by its owner. Now, as their numbers increase, they must find larger quarters. The neighboring Benedictine Monastery turns over to them the little Chapel of Portiuncula. Around this shrine the Franciscans build their huts of branches plastered together with mud and grass. From it as their center they go on preaching missions throughout

Italy, France, Germany, and even into Spain and Egypt. Wherever they go they find other hearts ready and responsive, and they are able to leave behind them new chapters of their Order. Realizing that it is not possible for everyone to become a friar, Francis establishes an associate order for laymen who, still living with their families, will yet follow the Franciscan rule of poverty, humility, and love.

Sister Clare. About this time a new and great love enters the life of Francis. In Assisi there is a young girl of the nobility—Clara Sciffi—who one day hears Francis preaching in the cathedral. His words and the sweetness of his spirit fire her imagination and speak to the longings of her heart. She, too, has known the emptiness of a life of idle pleasure. She comes to Francis, asking to be taken into his order. Although she is only sixteen, he accepts her, apparently without a question concerning the wisdom of the course and without proposing a single test of her power to persevere in the severity of the life which she is choosing. The spirits of Francis and Clara seem to recognize their kinship from the first minute of their meeting. It is arranged that Clara is to slip away from her home in the dark of night and join Francis and his friars at the Portiuncula, where she will take her vows and be received.

And so it comes about that Clara leaves her home on the night following Palm Sunday, March 18, 1212, and comes to the Portiuncula. The early morning mass

is said before the altar. There Clara declares her purpose to live after the manner of Jesus' injunctions to his disciples. Her hair is cut off and she becomes Clara, eventually the Mother of the Poor Clares who have continued to this day as the second order of the Franciscans. She is lodged temporarily with some Benedictine Nuns in the vicinity, then for a time in a convent in Assisi, and finally in St. Damian's, which the Benedictine monks donate to Francis as a home for his women followers. St. Damian's is the place where Francis himself had first heard the command of Christ to "rebuild the church." It now becomes his unfailing haven of refuge. Here the ministrations of Clara and her abounding faith in him and his cause give him new courage and joy in the difficult times of the years ahead. In spite of her youth, she has a steadfastness of faith and exaltation of courage truly saintly. Between her and Francis there seems to have been no spark of that romantic love which lusts to possess the body of its loved one. It is rather a love based on mutual admiration and devotion to a common cause. It may well be doubted whether Francis in later years could have passed through his hardships had his own spirit not found refreshment and inspiration from the soul of Clara and her ministry of sisterly care and comradeship.

Troubles of the Order. With the rapid growth of the Order, he has abundant need for Clara's encouragement. Not all the new brothers are able to under-

stand or to follow the new way of life. Divisions and jealousies arise. Francis must heal them. Some of the novitiates are for preaching hell and damnation to the rich and powerful. Others are for shutting themselves off entirely from the world. Francis must hold them steady to their course of demonstrating to the world the power of Christlike living to transform human hearts. "Our life in the midst of the world," he pleads, "ought to be such that on hearing and seeing us everyone shall feel constrained to praise our heavenly Father. You proclaim peace; have it in your hearts. Be not an occasion of wrath or scandal to anyone, but by your gentleness may all be led to peace, concord, and good works." But even such persuasive counsel is not always sufficient to recall some of the friars from backsliding. Then, like a Hebrew prophet of old, he sternly rebukes their wickedness.

Some bishops will not permit the friars to preach in their dioceses. Francis goes in person to one such bishop. "I have no need for anyone to help me in my task," says the prelate. Francis bows politely and goes away. In less than an hour he returns. "What now?" asks the bishop. "Monsignor," answers Francis, "when a father drives a son from the door he returns by the window." Disarmed by this gentle persistence, the bishop authorizes the friars to preach.

It is the age of the Crusades, and Francis, feeling in his own heart the strength of a whole army, sets out blithely on a one-man crusade to convert the Saracens.

He is shipwrecked and never gets farther than Slavonia. But he preaches there with the zeal of Paul, and men who cannot understand the language of his lips yet find their hearts touched by his spirit and the simple goodness of his life. Returning from the East, he spends about a year evangelizing central Italy, then starts on a new crusade. This time it is to Morocco. But he no sooner arrives than he is taken seriously ill, and his one companion finally persuades him to return to Assisi and the little hermitage at Portiuncula.

Legends. It is shortly after his return that an incident occurs, famous in picture and story. Quite discouraged by the failure of his attempts to reach the infidels, he goes to see Clara at St. Damian's. Just what words she speaks to him we do not know, but they are sufficient to renew the wellsprings of courage and hope within him. Coming away from that brief visit, he perceives a multitude of birds not far from the road. He walks toward them. Instead of taking flight they only flock closer around him. Thereupon he preaches to them: "Sister birds, you ought to praise and love your Creator very much. He has given you feathers for clothing, wings for flying, and all that is needful for you. He has made you the noblest of his creatures. He permits you to live in the pure air. You have neither to sow nor to reap and yet He takes care of you, watches over you, and guides you." According to the legend, the birds, on hearing these words, opened their beaks, arched their necks, and

spread their wings, "showing by their gestures and songs that the holy father's words gave them greatest joy."

The number of such legends about Francis and his early followers is legion. One concerns his conversion of some robbers who had plagued the neighborhood of Assisi. Francis seeks them out, going directly to their den. He does not scold them nor threaten them with punishment. He tells them, rather, that he knows that only necessity could have driven them to such a life, that they must be unhappy in it for they cannot enjoy snatching bread from those who need it, and that it results in making them lonely and hunted men. Their poverty must, therefore, be harder to bear than the poverty of other poor men who live in the city. The robbers listen to him at first as to a lunatic, but gradually their hardness melts under the warmth of his sympathy, and his gentle wisdom leads them to penitence and peace.

A certain priest has lived such an evil life that many of his people will no longer accept the sacraments from his polluted hands. Francis goes to the priest, kneels before him, kisses those hands, and says: "I know not if these hands be stained as men say of them; but this I know well: they cannot, however stained they may be, hinder the flow and efficacy of divine love. And since through them have come benefits innumerable, I kiss them, honoring God by honoring him whom God has made His minister." This simple act

of generosity effects a repentance that papal bulls had been powerless to produce.

One day Francis and Brother Masseo are walking along the road when Masseo suddenly asks: "What I want to know is why on earth everybody goes running after such a man as thee; thou art not handsome, or learned, or of good family. What is it that people see in thee?" Francis' answer is memorable. "It is because He has not found among sinners any smaller man, more insufficient, or more sinful; therefore, He has chosen me to accomplish the work He wills . . . He could find none more worthless, and so would He confound the dignity and grandeur, the strength, the beauty and the learning of the world."

On another occasion he is walking with Brother Leo. It is a bleak winter day and the cold is intense, but these two friars are talking about the secret of perfect joy. It is not, according to Francis, to be found in holiness and the power to edify others, nor in the power to give sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, or even to raise the dead. Nor does it come through the ability to prophesy, or to know all mysteries and to have knowledge. Thereupon, Brother Leo, filled with surprise, implores Francis to tell him wherein perfect joy can be found. Francis' reply is given in "Little Flowers," the fourteenth-century classic which records so many delightful stories about the first Franciscans.

"When we arrived at Santa Maria degli Angeli, soaked with rain, frozen with cold, covered with mud,

dying of hunger, and we knock and the porter comes in a rage, saying, 'Who are you?' and we answer, 'We are two of your brethren,' and he says, 'You lie, you are two lewd fellows who go up and down corrupting the world and stealing the alms of the poor. Go away from here!' and he does not open to us, but leaves us outside shivering in the snow and rain, frozen, starved, till night; then, if thus maltreated and turned away, we patiently endure all without murmuring against him, if we think with humility and charity that this porter really knows us truly and that God makes him speak thus to us, then, O Brother Leo, write that in this is the perfect joy . . . Above all the graces and all the gifts which the Holy Spirit gives to his friends is the grace to conquer one's self, and willingly to suffer pain, outrages, disgrace, and evil treatment, for the love of Christ!"

Opposition. One might think that Francis and his followers would meet with little opposition since they want nothing but to go about the world preaching penitence and peace, changing hearts, converting robbers, taming wolves, conversing with birds, and generally awakening the consciences of their fellow-mortals. But awakening the conscience of mankind is a precarious business. Old evils are likely to be tough and resistant. Established institutions like the church do not change easily. Vested interests do not give up their wealth without a struggle. In spite of his simplicity and humility, Francis comes into direct collision not only with individual sin and wickedness, but with more insidious evil in high places and among the very ones to whom he

has a right to look for help. In general, this opposition centers around three men.

The first is Ugolini, with whom Francis has had a lifelong friendship. Ugolini had first been bishop of Assisi, later a cardinal, and still later Pope Gregory IX. He admires Francis and loves him. But his own point of view is that of an ecclesiastic who believes that all authority is centered in the Church of Rome. He recognizes the decadent condition of the church and its need of reform. But he does not recognize the validity of any religious message except that which comes through the orthodox channels of the Roman Catholic Church. From the time when Francis and his first followers sought the blessing of Innocent III upon their brotherhood, Ugolini has bent his efforts toward making Francis come fully under obedience to the church and its regulations. His argument with Francis resolves itself to this: "I am your friend. I admire you, love you. I do not question your sincerity or sanctity, but are you being as truly humble as Christ would have you if you are not humble toward the church and the Pope? Remember that the church and the Pope have centuries of experience guiding them, as well as the authority descended from the Apostles. I pray you, therefore, submit yourself to the discipline and the regulations of the church." Francis believes in the authority of the church, but he also believes in the authority of his own inner experience. When the two come into conflict, and his friend Ugo-

lini pleads the cause of the church, basing his plea upon Francis' own desire to attain perfection of humility, Francis finally allows himself to be persuaded. The result is that in time his order loses its spontaneous quality of fellowship in freedom and becomes an ecclesiastical institution with a novitiate and gradations of authority and honor. Moreover, as such an institution, it soon comes to hold property, and its property increases vastly in wealth, so that while the friars may possess nothing individually they yet share collectively in the possessions of the institution. Thus, effectively, the rule of poverty is abrogated.

The second opponent is Elias, one of Francis' own friars. He was said to have the finest mind of his century. Sabatier describes him as "learned and energetic, eager to play the leading rôle in the work of reformation of religion." He seems to have been half politician, half saint. His religious enthusiasm is always held in check by a prudential shrewdness. Being one of the first of Francis' followers, he soon gains a wide influence among the others and gradually persuades them that Francis' simplicity is too simple, his way of life too extreme. They must have more organization, more "efficiency." While Francis is away on his crusades or evangelizing central Italy, Friar Elias preaches this doctrine at home.

The third opponent is St. Dominic. He has founded and still heads the Dominican Order. Whereas Francis stands for poverty and lay preaching, Dominic

stands for learning and the preaching of the clergy. Francis follows his own inspiration, Dominic obeys orders from an ecclesiastical authority. It is said of Dominic that he spends most of his time on the road to Rome to ask instruction of the Pope. His brotherhood is just the kind the Pope and the church most want. Therefore, Ugolini endeavors to have Francis amalgamate his brotherhood with that of Dominic. The Dominicans are popular with the church but only moderately with the people, while the Franciscans are extremely popular with the people and only tolerated by the church. Dominic realizes this and does all within his power to persuade Francis and his followers to merge with the Dominicans in a plan by which the Dominicans will accept vows of poverty and the Franciscans vows of greater obedience to the church.

Francis can meet and conquer the honest wickedness of sinful men, but these godly "friends" present a more difficult problem. In his exalted moments he can bring even these—temporarily—to his feet. One such time is that of the Chapter of the Mats. Five thousand of his friars have gathered in the plain before Assisi. The purpose of the meeting in simply collective prayer and mutual encouragement. Dominic, Elias, and Ugolini are there. All three are deeply stirred by the devotion and unity of spirit of the great multitude. But they wonder, in their prudent fashion, how so large an assemblage can be cared for—its physical needs supplied.

Has Francis made adequate provision? He has not. Nor is he worried. The friars are used to poverty—even to hunger. They know how to shift for themselves. And they have faith. For shelter they make for themselves little huts of wicker and rush matting. For pillows they use blocks of wood, or even stone. And they sing and praise God for their freedom and His love. The news of this remarkable example of cheerful poverty and devotion spreads quickly throughout the country, and barons, counts, bishops, and cardinals come from far and wide to see it. But what about food? Even the most humble and devout of men cannot live without bread. Yet Francis closes his sermon to the friars with these words: "I command all you that are here assembled, that none of you have care nor solicitude for what he shall eat nor what he shall drink, nor for aught necessary for the body, but give ye heed solely to prayer and to the praise of God: lay upon Him all solicitude for your body, for He hath special care of you."

At this the great multitude "with glad hearts and joyful countenances prostrate themselves in prayer." Dominic stands amazed. How can these friars be so blind to the necessity of the next meal? The record in the "Little Flowers" completes the story.

But the chief Shepherd, Christ the blessed, anon moved the hearts of the people of the cities round about, to bring wherewithal to eat and to drink to that holy congregation. And lo, there came quickly men with

carts, loaded with bread and wine, with beans and cheese and other good things to eat, according to the needs of Christ's poor ones . . . Wherefore, St. Dominic, beholding all these things wrought in them, humbly owned that he had falsely judged St. Francis of rashness, and drawing nigh to him knelt down and humbly confessed his fault.

Yes, Francis in his exalted moments can conquer even Dominic, Elias, and Ugolini. But no man can live continually at white heat. In the months and years that follow, especially while Francis is away on a new crusade in Egypt, these three men, each in his own way, each sincerely, and each with growing influence, slowly but surely mold the Franciscan brotherhood more and more into the pattern of a great and powerful institution of the church. Francis never permits his order to merge with that of Dominic, but Ugolini comes to dominate both. And only a few years after the Chapter of the Mats we find another Chapter-General assembled, now with Brother Elias in command, where Francis, sitting humbly at his feet, may speak only after he has gained permission by tugging at the robe of the new Father-General. This assemblage, in spite of Francis' fervent pleading, adopts a new rule, relaxing somewhat the requirement of absolute poverty and bringing the order more in line with the church's regulations for its older orders.

The Sorrows of Francis. All this was probably inevitable. Certain it is that so large a brotherhood needed more organization than simple-minded Francis could

give it. But it marks the end of Francis' happy spontaneity, the end of his gay troubadour days filled to overflowing with the joy of life. From now on he is increasingly a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. For in his own soul there is a conflict—a conflict of divided loyalties that will give him no peace. On the one hand, he wants to be loyal to the church and its constituted authorities who govern the Order he has founded. On the other, he still feels the stirring of the Holy Spirit within himself. That Spirit is not always at one with the church. Joan of Arc knew the same inner conflict. Perhaps every saint has felt it. It is only fair to the church to say that in the fullness of time it has recognized the validity of the inner voice and canonized the man or woman who followed it instead of conforming to the authority of the church of the day. But the canonization has usually come many years, sometimes centuries, after the saint has been burned at the stake.

* * *

The rest of Francis' story is soon told. The order continued to grow, but from the time when he was superseded as its head he became more and more a lonely figure—a voice crying in the wilderness. Everyone reverenced him, but only a faithful few followed him. To most, his absolute poverty seemed too austere, too impractical. His own body began to weaken, less,

perhaps, because of physical hardships than because of this sense of defeat.

The Stigmata. In the early fall of 1224, at the age of forty-two, he sought solitude for meditation and prayer at a retreat on Mount Verna. After forty days of fasting there, he was praying early one morning. "I ask two things before I die," he prayed, "that I may feel thy sufferings, O Son of God, and that I may experience that immeasurable love which made thee suffer and die for poor sinners like us." As he thus prayed he suddenly beheld a vision. In the rays of the rising sun, he saw a seraph flying toward him with outstretched wings. The seraph was nailed to a cross which it bore with it in its flight. In the midst of the raptures which the vision brought, Francis felt the sting of sharp physical pain. When the vision faded from his view, he found upon himself the marks of nails in his hands and feet and a wound in his side—the stigmata of the crucified Christ. The phenomenon is attested by all the early biographers.

The fame of the miracle of the stigmata swept over Italy like wildfire. It was now certain that Francis would be canonized. His friars had the utmost difficulty in preventing great mobs of the superstitious from trying to reach him just to touch his garment or even to pick up a paring from his finger nails in the belief that it would work miraculous cures. The Catholic biographers fill many pages with his alleged miracles. From this time on, people were less inter-

ested in Francis' words and his way of life than in the miracles which they believed he could work.

But Francis himself claimed no supernatural powers. Nor did he want any. He wanted only that he and his brotherhood should live Christlike lives, demonstrate His love, and share His sufferings. What the superstitious and the Roman Church itself did not see was that he was accomplishing a far greater miracle than any of the petty ones they ascribed to him. For he was transforming the spiritual life of his age. He was freeing it from materialism. He was purging the church. He was humbling the proud and lifting up the poor. He was teaching the world the beauty of simple and sacrificial living. He was restoring men's faith in a living and loving God. He was bringing peace to their hearts. He was putting songs on their lips. What greater miracle could any saint accomplish?

The Canticle of the Sun. The following year was his last. His strength steadily waned. But even in his weakness his spirit often soared. One day after a visit with Clara at St. Damian's, he felt again within him the stirring of the Spirit. The whole world seemed bathed in an exquisite beauty. In that incandescent moment he composed his "Canticle of the Sun." Matthew Arnold has translated it for us:

Praise be my Lord God with all his creatures, and especially our brother, the sun, who brings us the day and who brings us the light; fair is he and shines with a very great splendor: O Lord, he signifies to us thee!

Praised be my Lord for our sister, the moon, and for the stars, the which He has set clear and lovely in heaven.

Praised be my Lord for our brother, the wind, and for air and clouds, calms and all weather by the which thou upholdest life in all creatures.

Praised be my Lord for our sister water, who is very serviceable unto us and humble and precious and clean.

Praised be my Lord for our brother fire, through whom thou givest us light in the darkness; and he is bright and pleasant and very mighty and strong.

Praised be my Lord for our mother, the earth, the which doth sustain us and keep us, and bringeth forth divers fruits and flowers of many colors, and grass.

Praised be my Lord for our sister, the death of the body, from which no man escapeth. Woe to him who dieth in mortal sin! Blessed are they who are found walking by thy most holy will, for the second death shall have no power to do them harm.

Praise ye and bless the Lord, and give thanks to Him and serve Him with great humility.

This canticle still stands among the finest outpourings of man in appreciation of nature. The friars sang it on street corners throughout Italy and the rest of Europe. It became their most popular hymn. The superstitious, whose minds were always fixed upon miracles and other-worldly events, could never quite understand that there was more of the real Francis in that canticle than in all the miracles ascribed to him.

With the canticle itself Francis soon worked a minor miracle of some social consequence. One day a feud of long standing between the bishop of Assisi and the

local magistrate suddenly flared. The peace of the city was threatened. Francis, hearing of it, called the disputants to his bedside. As they stood there, he had his friars sing to them his canticle, to which he had added a new stanza for the occasion: "Praise be to thee, O Lord, for those who for love of thee grant pardon, bear weakness, endure stripes. Blessed are they who continue to dwell in peace, for by thee, the Highest, shall they be crowned." The simplicity of the message and its appeal to their nobler instincts struck a responsive chord in the hearts of the antagonists, and they were reconciled.

His eyes began to fail. He submitted himself to the barbarous medical treatment of that day—a searing of his forehead by red-hot coals. When he realized that the doctors were about to apply them, he shrank for a moment in terror. Then he rallied, saying: "Brother Fire, you are beautiful above all creatures; be favorable to me now. You know how much I have always loved you. Be thou courteous to me in this hour." The Brothers could not stand the sight of the operation and fled. When they returned, they found Francis smiling. "Why did you run away?" he asked. "I felt no pain at all. If the doctor so wishes, he may burn me again." The "cure" was, of course, of no avail.

At last it was apparent that his death was approaching. He asked to be taken to Assisi from Sienna, where he then lay. The journey was made with the greatest

precaution. A company of soldiers guarded his body lest the citizens of neighboring Perugia attempt to steal it—for the body of a saint was considered a precious relic by which miracles might be wrought. Quite literally it was worth far more than its weight in gold.

For some months he lay quartered in the bishop's palace, where he often scandalized not only the bishop but the townsfolk by his outbursts of song. Proper Brother Elias besought him to hold his tongue and behave more sorrowfully, as a true saint should do; but the soul of Francis at such times was as free as a lark—he paid no heed to the admonitions but continued his songs in praise of Sister Death.

What could Elias do with such a cantankerous saint? Nothing but accede to Francis' own request to send him to Portiuncula to die. All sorts of crazy things had happened at Portiuncula. The holy insanity of a cheerful saint might not be out of place there. So to Portiuncula, Elias had Francis borne. There, in a respite from his extreme suffering, he summoned his strength and dictated his will. It is a lengthy document, too long to quote here, but its purport is crystal clear. He had no material possessions to bequeath, he had something more important—the secret of a way of life in which he and his Brothers had found peace and joy. He recounted the steps by which they had discovered that way. He reminded the friars of how they had gladly lived in poor stables and abandoned churches

and worked with their hands. He urged them again not to own property, either individually or collectively. He interdicted them from asking any bull from the court of Rome or relaxing in any way their vows or compromising their freedom.

His will finished, he asked that he be stripped of his clothing and laid naked upon the bare earth. So at sunset, October 3, 1226, Sister Death found him. He passed serenely, and, as his sorrowing friars knelt around him, a great multitude of larks alighted upon the thatch of his cell and burst into song.

Two years later he was canonized. Yet another two years and Ugolini, then Pope Gregory IX, solemnly "interpreted" the rule of Francis, especially that part of it forbidding the ownership of property, and declared that Franciscans were not bound to observe the provisions of Francis' will. The will itself was later confiscated and destroyed, being actually burned over the head of a friar who persisted in desiring to observe it.

Over the tiny Chapel of Portiuncula, the Church, under Ugolini's leadership, reared a great cathedral, costly and magnificent. There to this day the two stand —the simple chapel completely dominated, yes imprisoned, by the large church. Even the dullest traveler is struck by the contrast between the two buildings. Laurence Housman interprets its spiritual significance: "With lavish expenditure and ostentation the church forgave St. Francis his love of poverty. That defection

from her scheme of temporal power she covered with a cloak of subtle embroideries."

The Outreach of Francis. In spite of the partial defeat of Francis before the temporal power of the church and the modification of his rule renouncing the ownership of communal property, his Order flourished. In ever-widening circles its influence spread throughout the world. One little chapter got started in the city of Florence. Slowly but persistently it began to warm up the spirit of that city. In the course of a few years that spirit burst into flames, and the flames were the poetry of Dante and the art of Giotto. Wherever life was hard, there the Franciscan Brothers went, bringing their gospel of penitence and peace. They became not only lay preachers but clerical ones, missionaries, confessors, ambassadors, mediators, scholars, scientists, and artists. They entered the universities and vied with the Dominicans as teachers of theology and of canon law. Among their scholars they numbered Roger Bacon, Bonaventura, and Duns Scotus. Four popes have risen from the Franciscan ranks. A great Christian king of France—St. Louis—was proud to call himself a Franciscan. The brotherhood founded and still maintains missions in North Africa, the Near East, India, China, and Japan. In America many of our most notable early explorers were Franciscan missionaries. They established monasteries, hospitals, and missions in Canada, in Mexico, and in California. Today, more than twenty-five thousand of their Order are

going about the world quietly, humbly, seeking nothing for themselves but an opportunity to serve their fellow men. In Chicago, where these lines are written, they maintain a well-known Retreat to which Catholics and Protestants alike may go and spend days in quiet meditation, far from the roar and confusion of city life. It is a bit of heaven in the midst of the hell of modern industrial conflict. And that describes the essential nature of their work throughout the seven centuries of their growth—making little heavens wherever they go.

His Sources of Power. From his mother, Francis as a child received a character pattern of gentleness and submission, from his father, an ambition to excel. These qualities stayed with him through life. His gentleness made him persuasive. He might well have said with the Psalmist, "Thy gentleness hath made me great." His submission he transformed from a childish obedience to an earthly father to a complete commitment to a heavenly one. The desire to excel went through a similar metamorphosis—from excelling in sports and games to excelling in humility. Yet he retained in his humility the sense of life as a game to be enjoyed, a song to be sung.

Greater far than these hereditary sources was the spiritual experience in which by a long process of travail he was reborn. That process we have seen—how he sickened of the pleasures of the flesh; how he found the emptiness of wealth and social position; how he

struggled through doubt and despair until he found peace and joy where he had least expected it—in poverty and in service among the lepers and the outcasts. He could have learned this by reading the lives of the Apostles and early saints. But discovering it for himself gave a freshness and convincing quality to his preaching that no second-hand experience could have conveyed. He could cry exultantly, "I have found the way to abounding happiness! Come, walk with me, and share it!"

Francis was a man of the masses. In him the heart of the people beat. They recognized in him a magnified edition of themselves. He had grown up among them, shared their defeats and victories, their sorrows and joys, and won a freedom of soul which they, too, might win. He was a representative man in whom the common man saw himself at his best. That man was, for that very reason, all the more ready to follow where Francis led.

His absolute commitment to a life of poverty, a dedication "nothing withholding and free," constituted another source of his power. No one could accuse him of greed or even self-interest. In an age when an unbridled lust for money coursed rampant among nobles, burghers, and priests alike, the very fact that one man renounced it and would possess nothing but the coarse tunic on his back made him outstanding. And when he proved himself happier than the rich and powerful, men sought him out to find his secret.

That secret he told in deeds more than in words. He did not preach about courage and goodness, poverty and joy; he walked them in on his own two legs. He was an actor who lived his part. The world was his stage. No man since Christ had been more dramatic. Those who saw him could not help contrasting the warmth of his personality and the simplicity of his speech with the coldness and formality of the priests. They found more power under his patched homespun than under all the rich robes of the clergy. Such power as the clergy had depended upon their external authority and their supposed possession of the keys of heaven and hell. The power of Francis came from within—from a great heart sensitized by love—love for God, love for men, love for birds and beasts, love for everything God had created. That love revealed itself less in fastings and ceremonies than in friendship to lepers, in sympathy with all classes and types of men, in understanding of the essential nobility, however hidden, in every human heart.

It would be exaggeration to say that Francis had a philosophy of life. He had nothing so formidable or chilling. He had something better. He had *convictions*. Those convictions he had wrought out on the anvil of his own suffering. They centered around his conceptions of God and his fellow men. God to Francis was a living and indwelling personal power in the world. Christ had revealed to men what God was like—how stern in dealing with injustice, how loving in

his tenderness to the victims of man's inhumanity. All men were sons of God and therefore brothers. Every brother had within him, therefore, something of the Father, some spark of divinity. War was wrong, and the contentions over property that gave rise to war were wrong, for they were a denial of men's brotherhood; they quenched the spark. Francis would show in his own life and in the life of his friars that by removing from their hearts all desire for property the divine spark in them would be free. With it they would kindle the world.

He had another conviction no less fundamental than these. It was that religious institutions in general and his own brotherhood in particular must be kept free from any compromising entanglement with the economic and social order. The church of his day depended for its support upon the feudal lords and the city capitalists. For that very reason the common people suspected it. By insistence on poverty as the first rule of his Order, Francis gave it an independence that it could have achieved in no other way. The people, rich and poor alike, respected and approved that independence.

Such were his convictions. As men listened to him and watched him living out these principles, they felt their own hearts glowing within them. The coldness of the long winter of the Dark Ages melted. Springtime for the human spirit was at hand. A little poor man of Assisi had brought it!

LEONARDO DA VINCI

1452-1519

THE story of Leonardo da Vinci is the story of an illegitimate child who climbed to a place among the greatest men of all time. In him more than in any other were united the creative power of the artist and the inquiring mind of the scientist. At the height of his career he topped the painters and sculptors of his day and made profoundly important contributions as mathematician, military engineer, civil engineer, geographer, astronomer, anatomist, botanist, and chemist. In spite of this almost fabulous record of versatility and genius, he died lamenting "that he had offended God and man" because he had not labored in art as he should have done.

His Racial Inheritance. His story, like most life-histories, begins long before his birth. His father and mother were both natives of Tuscany in Italy, a province which 2,300 years earlier had been the home of the Etruscan people, noted for their excellence in the

arts. Their heritage was in his blood. We know little of that ancient Etruscan civilization, but bits of its art —statues of startling beauty in bronze and marble and gold—were being dug up at the time Leonardo was born. There were no scientific expeditions or excavations in those days, but peasants plowing their fields would unearth a bronze or terra cotta vase, or the hand or head of a statue, or a copper faun. Knowing nothing of their origin, the peasants looked upon these finds as objects planted by the devil. They used them in superstitious practices. For example, the hand of a statue would be kept by some old granny to scare away pain, to heal a fever, or to bring good luck to the person touched. A cow in labor, unable to bear her calf, would be touched by this hand, and promptly, according to the tradition, the calf would be dropped. But eventually many of these art works were gathered in the great museums of Florence, where Leonardo saw them in his boyhood.

His Father. Leonardo's father, Ser Pietro da Vinci, was a notary of the commune of Florence, whose business brought him to the village of Anchiano. There in the wine shop of a wayside inn he met a sixteen-year-old orphan girl who worked in the inn as a servant. He fell in love with this girl, and she was soon with child. Ser Pietro's father, hearing of the affair, brought down a stern parental hand and broke it up, seeing to it that the girl was married to a peasant, a drunken nobody of the countryside, who would over-

look her condition for a due consideration. His son, Pietro, he saw more fittingly married to a girl of good family and generous dowry. When this wife proved childless, however, Pietro took his natural son, Leonardo, the child of the peasant girl, into his own home.

Pietro seems to have been a man of unusual physical energy and of matrimonial persistence. After outliving three successive wives in addition to the illegitimate love of his youth, he married a fourth wife when he was sixty years of age and justified his audacity by fathering six more children by this union.

Pietro left Leonardo a bequest in his will, but the legitimate sons were successful in keeping it from him. Leonardo's reference in one of his diaries to his father's death is laconic enough. "On the 9th day of July in the year 1504, of a Wednesday, at eight in the night, expired my father, Ser Pietro da Vinci, a notary at the Palace of Podesta. He was eighty. He has left ten children of the male sex and two of the female." Only that and nothing more.

His Mother. Of Leonardo's mother we know even less. In other of his diaries he makes several entries referring to a Catarina—his mother's name—but whether or not these references concerned her is uncertain. In his book on painting he asks a question which may reflect a thought of his mother. "Have you not noted how the mountain women, though clad in poor, coarse stuffs, surpass by their beauty those who

are bespangled?" Beyond these doubtful allusions history is silent on the life of his mother following the birth of Leonardo.

The World He Entered. From such hearty and vigorous parents came Leonardo. Into what sort of world did he come? It was a world of superstition and ignorance, of corruption in church and state, a world ruled by fear and force and belief in magic. But it was an age in which a new spirit was stirring in the hearts of a few artists and scientists. That new spirit had been kindled by several men at various times and places, but probably by none more than Francis of Assisi, the little poor man who in the thirteenth century demonstrated a new way of life—a life divorced from property and finding joy in humility and love. By that demonstration Francis had turned the thoughts of some men, at least, away from preoccupation with securing property in this world and magical methods of escaping hell-fire in the world to come. He turned them toward the life of the spirit that could be lived abundantly in the present world. The spark which Francis and his followers kindled in the thirteenth century had burst into flames in Florence in the poetry of Dante, then in the paintings of Giotto and Fra Angelico, and was soon to become a celestial fire in the works of Verrocchio, Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, Raphael, Botticelli, and Perugino.

That spark, however, was as yet only a faint glow in science, where Toscanelli and a few other keen minds

were attempting through mathematics to find an explanation of the universe. It was beginning to glow in philosophy, too, in the analytical mind of Thomas Aquinas, who was seeking to systematize human knowledge. But the man in the street knew nothing of all this. Wherever he went, corruption or superstition blanketed human understanding and bound human effort.

Men looked to the stars not only to tell them of future events but to furnish them a philosophy of history. The astrologers of the day taught that the great men of history had come to earth with the conjunction of certain planets, and by calculating when future conjunctions were to take place, they predicted coming events.

Alchemy, far from being a science, was devoted primarily to concocting magic formulae for turning lead into gold or creating the elixir of life. Each metal had its corresponding god—Venus for copper, Mars for iron, Saturn for lead, Jupiter for pewter, and Mercury for quicksilver.

Medicine was scarcely above the witch doctor stage of development. Herbs were noted for their specific healing qualities—largely imagined—and were combined in most amazing mixtures. Treatments for serious ailments involved devices that called more upon fancy than science. For example, when a certain duchess lay near death by premature childbirth, one so-called doctor advised that her right leg be wrapped with

a snake skin, another that her husband's cap be tied to her abdomen, while a third suggested that she be given strong spirits in which had been dissolved a combination of deer's antlers and cochineal.

Bleeding by leeches was the panacea for all bodily ills. Into the home of a sick man the doctor would bring the barber and the barber's assistant. Shutters would be closed and candles lighted. The barber would roll up his sleeves and then with a razor make an incision in the vein indicated by the doctor while the assistant held a brass basin to catch the blood. The doctor himself seemed to perform no other function except that of providing a certain atmosphere of dignity, induced by his grave face, his large spectacles, and his dark lilac-colored velvet cape lined with squirrel fur.

Corruption in High Places. In religion and politics the superstition of the day was coupled with greed and thirst for power. The church was powerful in temporal matters as well as in spiritual. The Borgias reigned in church affairs, and the story of their family will serve to indicate the condition of church and state at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The founder of the Borgia family was Alexander VI, described as "the most memorable of the corrupt and secular popes of the Renaissance." A Spaniard by birth, he traced his lineage back through the Castilian Moors, and tradition says that his appearance testified to the negro strain in his blood. By his unprincipled diplomacy he rose high in the hierarchy of the church and waxed vastly

rich in the process. In the year 1492, when Columbus was sailing westward over unknown seas to find the East, Alexander, by scandalously bribing the electors, had himself elected pope. In that office he indulged in most of the sins that Moses proscribed and many others that Moses never dreamed of. Trickery, deception, murder, orgies of licentiousness, even incest were in the catalogue of his offenses. He took as his mistress a certain Vanozza dei Cattani, a beautiful Roman woman. She bore him four children whom he openly acknowledged and for whose benefit he exercised all his mighty powers as vicar of Christ.

Cesar Borgia, his second son, became one of the most powerful figures of Leonardo's time. It was this tyrant who inspired Machiavelli's work, "The Prince." Alexander used Cesar's sister, Lucretia, a very comely woman, as a pawn in a long string of diplomatic marriages made and annulled at his whim. At one time when the pope left Rome on business, he left Lucretia in charge as regent, and the world beheld the astounding spectacle of a woman, the illegitimate daughter of the pope himself, as regent on the pontifical throne. In the latter years of his reign it became an extremely dangerous thing to be a friend of Pope Alexander because that might involve being made a cardinal, and as soon as a cardinal became rich enough he died mysteriously and the pope confiscated his property. One after another the cardinals dropped off in this way, and new ones were appointed in their place. When

Savonarola dared to expose the wickedness of this pope, the holy father tried to bribe him with the offer of a cardinal's hat. When the bribe failed, he excommunicated him and finally instigated his torture and martyrdom.

That was the sort of world into which Leonardo was born. To make his way in it he was endowed with vigorous blood, and he early developed three strong traits: an insatiable curiosity which caused him continually to be observing and prying into natural phenomena; a restless striving for mastery of whatever he undertook in science or art; and a capacity for what modern science would call "disinterested research." Facts were facts to him, to be reverenced above all superstition and sentiment.

Leonardo's Education. His father had intended to give him the usual education of the day so that he might become in time a notary like himself. But Leonardo's schooling took a different turn. In fact, in the judgment of many of his contemporaries Leonardo never became an educated man, and he himself records his thankfulness for that. To be educated in those days meant to be versed in the Latin and Greek classics. He always preferred to study nature in the raw. In after years he had only contempt for those scholars and doctors who took their knowledge second-hand, appealing a hundred times to authority for every one time that they appealed to experience. Leonardo had learned to depend upon experience and observation.

Though he was not scholastic, he had learning of a new sort. And this is the way it came about:

At the age of seven he was put into the church school of Santa Petronilla, near Vincy. There he did not get along well with the other boys. They liked to torture animals or tear the wings off butterflies. He sickened at such sights and would turn from them to go off into the woods by himself. There he would lie for hours, studying the structure of flowers or the habits of birds. On one occasion he was not content simply to turn away from the boys who were finding their pleasure in baiting a dog with a wounded mole. In a burst of angry courage he rushed among them, knocked down three of them, rescued the hapless mole, and bore it away to safety. The boys could not understand such squeamishness. Leonardo, in consequence, found himself deprived not only of a mother's affection and a normal home life, but of happy friendships with youth of his own age.

At the age of thirteen Leonardo went to live with his grandfather in Florence. Not far from his home a building was being constructed by the architect, Ser Biago da Ravenna. Leonardo used to stand by and watch the construction operations. His intelligent questions and comments brought him to the attention of Ser Biago, who made him his pupil and instructed him in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, and mechanics.

When Leonardo was eighteen he knocked one evening at the door of Toscanelli, the famous naturalist, mathe-

matician, physicist, and astronomer. It was Toscanelli who had advised Christopher Columbus that a sea route to India might be reached through the Antipodes, and prophesied success for such an adventure. He lived removed from the gaiety of the court in ascetic but happy seclusion in his studies. He opened his door to young Leonardo, expecting to receive only the usual guest who came out of curiosity to see a man who was regarded as something of a magician. But conversing with Leonardo, he was astonished at the boy's genius for mathematics. Like Ser Biago, he took him as a pupil. On clear summer nights the old scholar and the boy would climb a little hill near Florence, on whose crest Toscanelli had an observatory. There he taught the lad astronomy and mathematics and the laws of nature as he had discovered them. Leonardo's father made no serious objection to this sort of study, but, like many a modern father in a similar situation, did not see that it was going to help Leonardo get a job. He noted, however, that his son in his spare hours was making sketches, drawings, models in clay. One day he carried off a few of these to his old friend, Andrea del Verrocchio, a master goldsmith, painter, and sculptor. Verrocchio, like Toscanelli and Biago, was astonished at the boy's ability and soon took him into his workshop for further instruction.

Verrocchio believed that mathematics was the common foundation of art and science. Further, he had studied anatomy to such an advantage that his eques-

trian statues were among the foremost in sculpture. He was the first artist to make death masks and anatomical casts as bases for sculpture and painting. But his works, although models of technical accuracy, lacked something in grace and charm. Professor Vasari, who was one of the first biographers of Leonardo (he was almost a contemporary), says that after the youth had been Verrocchio's pupil for a little while, the master allowed him to paint the kneeling angel in the picture, "The Baptism of Christ." Leonardo's angel so surpassed anything the master had done that Verrocchio resolved from that day never to touch a brush again.

Such was the way of Leonardo's education—being tutored under the masters of the arts and sciences of his day. By this method he developed not only his skill in painting and modeling, and his knowledge of anatomy, astronomy, and mathematics, but also an understanding of Nature and her laws, and a keener power of personal observation.

His Appearance. Look at him now as he stands upon the threshold of his career. About twenty-eight or twenty-nine years of age, he is tall, handsome, and has a remarkably strong physique. His light-blue eyes are deep-set and usually cold, but capable of great tenderness. His hair and beard are fair, his voice quiet and pleasant, his smile captivating. He dresses simply and conservatively, avoiding the loud colors and perfumes of the day. He wears a black short jacket over

spotless white linen and under a dark red cape of ancient Florentine cut that reaches to his knees. On his head is a black velvet beret, unadorned. His physical strength has already distinguished him, and he has become known as an excellent marksman with the bow, a superior horseman and swimmer, and a master of fencing. He is left-handed, but one biographer says, "With this left hand of his, in appearance as soft and slender as that of a young woman, he can bend iron horseshoes and twist the tongue of a brazen bell; yet, drawing the face of a beautiful girl with the very same hand, he applies transparent shades, in charcoal or pencil, with touches as light as the quiverings of a butterfly's wings."

But this describes only the outer man. Underneath these external characteristics a rare personality has been forming. It is by no means all virtue without fault. He has developed a charm which radiates from him in conversation as well as in the touch of his brushes. He is kindly, but hardly affectionate. His real passions have already begun to find expression in intellectual work rather than in human relationships. His kindliness, however, extends to all living beings. It has made him a vegetarian and given him a solicitude even for the life of insects. In spite of this personal kindliness, he is the detached scientist whenever he is observing. He will not harm a man or beast of his acquaintance, and he detests war, calling it "the most bestial madness." But as a young scientist he would invent machines of war,

justifying himself with the argument that the more destructive and deadly a war can prove, the shorter it will be. (Could he have known the experience of the world in 1914-1938, he would surely have seen the fallacy of that argument.) He has not yet learned to concentrate his energies—in fact, he never will learn this important lesson. Even though he has studied under one of the greatest scientists of his day, he has no conception of the size of the universe. We have grown accustomed to our feeling of helplessness before the vastness of scientific knowledge and no longer hope to master even one science; but Leonardo, standing on the threshold of his career, is a lone spectator of this whole new universe, and his curiosity about it consumes him. In that new world of science he is like a baby interrogating the mysteries of his toes, then his crib, his room, his attendant, the world outside, and finally human relations. Neither Leonardo nor the baby realizes the magnitude of the task he has started, but confidently scrutinizes the nearest thing at hand, irresistibly drawn further on by the implications of each new grasp on reality. Add to these characteristics of Leonardo his growing tendency to start new projects before old ones are more than half completed, and we will not be surprised to find a life of extraordinary achievement shot through with tragedy.

But just now no shadow of tragedy darkens his path. He is confident in his skill and power and knowledge. His knowledge he has already applied in his score or

more of practical and artistic inventions. Among these was a silver lute of many strings, shaped like a horse's head. One day Lorenzo the Magnificent heard Leonardo play upon this lute and proposed that the young man journey to Milan and present it as a gift from Lorenzo to Ludovico Sforza Moro, Duke of Lombardy. Thereupon Leonardo, about thirty years of age, set out for Milan. He met Ludovico, presented him with the lute, and conversed with him. He learned that Ludovico's first ambition was to secure by means of a strong military power the sovereignty he was then in the process of usurping from his sister-in-law, Bona, wife of the reigning prince of the realm, who was dying. Leonardo wanted a patron. There was little choice among princes; practically all had gained their power by one kind of deviltry or another. Ludovico was no worse than the rest. Moreover, he was wealthy and needed art works to offset, in some measure, the popular memory of his misdeeds. So Leonardo wrote him a letter, one draft of which is still preserved in the Ambrosian Library in Milan. The letter is worth quoting in full, for it reveals not only the versatility of Leonardo but his shrewdness in playing up the particular services that the Duke most needed at the time.

My gracious Lord,

Having seen and fully examined all the works of those who are considered as masters and inventors of instruments of war, but whose discoveries, together with the working of the aforesaid instruments, do not

at all differ from those generally used, I shall endeavor, without detriment to any one, to explain my secret inventions to Your Excellency, and exhibit these at the command of Your Excellency at an opportune time; I hope all those things shortly enumerated in this letter will meet with good success.

1. I have the means of constructing very light bridges, which may be carried about easily, and with which one may pursue enemies as well as escape from them according to one's need. And I have others which are fireproof and cannot be injured during battle; they can be removed and put up again easily without trouble. I have moreover the means of setting fire to the bridges of the enemy and of destroying them.

2. During the siege of a place I know how to cut off the water in the moats, and how to construct by means of steps all manner of bridges as well as other instruments which are required in such an undertaking.

3. If during the siege bombs cannot be used, because of the height of a rampart or the strong fortifications of a place, I have means to destroy every tower or any other fortress, unless it be founded on a rock.

4. I know of another kind of bomb, light and carried without trouble, and with which a hailstorm of missiles may be projected. The smoke produced thereby causes great terror amongst the enemy to his hurt and confusion.

5. In like manner I know how to construct subterraneous caverns and narrow winding passages, which can be made without noise, and through which one may reach a definite aim, even if one had to pass under ditches as under a river.

6. I also make safe covered chariots which cannot be injured; if with their artillery they get amongst the

enemy, the largest armies may give way before them, and then the infantry may follow securedly and without any opposition.

7. If necessary, I can make bombs, mortarpieces, and light field guns, beautiful and practical as to shape and not at all known in general use.

8. Where bombs cannot be used, I am able to construct engines throwing stones; slings, battering rams, and other instruments of marvelous effect and extraordinary kind; in one word, I can construct various weapons of offense as necessity demands.

9. And if required, I know of many instruments for use on sea, well adapted for offensive and defensive warfare, and I know ships able to resist the largest bombs, and which can also create dust and smoke.

10. I believe I may say that in times of peace I may vie with any one in architecture, in the erection of public as well as private buildings, and also in making aqueducts from one place to another.

In works of marble, bronze, and terra cotta, as well as in painting, I shall do whatever can be done by any one whosoever he may be. I shall yet be able to work at the bronze horse, which will be an immortal glory and everlasting monument to the blessed memory of His Lordship, your father, and of the celebrated house of Sforza.

And if any of the aforesaid things appear impossible and impracticable to any one, I am ready and most willing to make the experiment in your park or in any other place agreeable to Your Excellency, to whom I recommend myself with the utmost devotion.[1]

[1] Rosenberg, Adolf: *Leonardo da Vinci,* pp. 42-44.

What Was Expected of the "Court Musician." Leonardo was not over-rating his ability, as his later accomplishments proved. Ludovico accepted him, giving him the title of court musician, a title which he held during the next fifteen years, although in that time his actual musical work was the least important of all the ways in which he served the Duke. For he designed for him a great system of canals and aqueducts extending through a considerable part of the dukedom. He invented military machines for the use of the Duke's soldiers. He drew plans (seldom adopted) for model towns, for a gigantic mausoleum, for a flying machine, and for almost countless other projects. He would be called from a painting to attend to a plumbing system, and from the plumbing system to the costumes and decorations for a party. The most important artistic commission the Duke gave him at the outset was the construction of the great statue showing the Duke's father mounted upon a war horse. Leonardo began this work in 1483, but it was fifteen years later before it was ready for casting in bronze. He loved horses and spent much time studying their anatomy and their movements, especially those moments when they were electric with energy. Like most of his later creations, the statue was never completed. But even in its uncompleted form it marked Leonardo as a sculptor of unusual ability.

Thus Leonardo started on his career. We cannot understand the achievement of that career without understanding his central purpose. Moreover, we will

lose most of the drama of it if we do not consider the opposition he faced.

His Purpose. His purpose seems to have been nothing less than the discovery of all the laws of nature and the application of those laws to both science and art.[2] One cannot read his notebooks without the growing conviction that he tried to know all things and do them. He would go into raptures when he had discovered some new principle, and promptly begin to apply it in new inventions. The man of learning in him was servant to the artist and inventor. As one biographer (Seailles) puts it, he sought "to understand in order to create."

Who and What Opposed Him? One might think that such a beneficent purpose, even if too ambitious, would meet no serious opposition beyond the limitations of the man who had it, but the fifteenth century was not the twentieth. Leonardo came first into conflict with those scholars and scientists of his day who did not base their knowledge upon observation of nature but upon ancient scholastic tradition on one hand and the authority of the church on the other. Against these he was a lone Horatius fighting for a cause not yet born. Wherever his observations led him to clash with the opinions of Augustine or St. Thomas Aquinas, he was called a heretic and the authority of the church invoked

[2] McCurdy says that "it was his aim to extend the limits of man's knowledge of himself, of his structure, of his environments, of all the forms of life around him, of the manner of the building up of the earth and sea and the form of the heaven."

against him. Whenever his discoveries ran afoul the opinions of Aristotle or Plato, he was denounced by the orthodox philosophers of the day. Against all such opposition Leonardo offered only a non-violent resistance. He preferred to make his inventions, paint his pictures, carve his statues, and let them be his ultimate defense. "Whoever appeals to authority," he once said, "applies not his intellect but his memory." He had only contempt for authority as such and gave to experience (or experiment, which is only self-conscious experience) the high place his contemporaries gave to authority.

Although Leonardo was never brought to trial as a heretic, the church placed under ban one important branch of his investigations. It held that a human corpse was sacred, and it was, therefore, ready to punish as sacrilege any anatomist's attempt to dissect one in his study of the laws of structure of the human body. Leonardo was an anatomist. He secured his corpses from the gallows and from poorhouses. His patron at the time was Alexander VI, who was too much fascinated and awed by what he deemed the black art of Leonardo to desire to interfere with the young man's eccentric and anathematized observations. Finally, however, a personal enemy gained the ear of the pope, and for a time, at least, Leonardo's investigation of cadavers was effectively stopped.

The church's opposition to Leonardo was not confined to the orthodox prelates. Even such a man as Savonarola, daring reformer of church and state, de-

nounced all worldly wisdom, of which Leonardo was the greatest contemporary exponent. Said Savonarola, "Worthy apostles and martyrs versed in logic and philosophy. . . . . Homer and Virgil, Plato and Aristotle —they are all bound for the dwelling place of Satan. . . . . Science giveth men a stone instead of bread. Behold them that follow the teachings of this world—their hearts are of stone." That there was and is much truth in these words no spiritually-minded person will deny. Yet over against them place these of da Vinci with their lofty sense of the continuity and consistency of all knowledge and all phenomena: "He that knoweth little loveth little. Great love is the daughter of great knowledge."

Next to this opposition of the church and the scholars must be set down the intrigue and treachery amid which any artist of his day had to work. There were, as always, more artists than patrons. Hence, there was keen competition among the artists. Since an artist's living depended upon the wealth and power of the prince who gave him commissions, and since any prince's wealth and power were precarious, an artist's own fortunes would vacillate with those of his prince. When the prince lost wealth and power, the artist lost his place and must seek a new patron. This loss of power of his successive patrons (although he had a full fifteen years with Ludovico) made Leonardo attach himself first to one and then to another, abandoning the works he had begun under the former. It is responsible in part for

the fact that most of his greatest works of art and his scientific researches were uncompleted.

Again, he was handicapped by lack of funds—at least until the last few years of his life. He was constantly in need, yet he treated his pupils generously and spent recklessly any momentary surplus on zoological specimens and other materials for his arts and sciences. At one time we find him writing Ludovico to remind him that he has not only received no salary for many months, but has paid out of his own pockets the wages of his two assistants working on the statue of Ludovico's father. At another time he must take his pay for building a canal out of whatever profit he could make by selling some of its water for irrigation purposes. If, instead of having to count pennies, he could have had the equivalent of a few thousand dollars a year, who can say to what limit his scientific researches and his art might not have gone?

One other form of opposition confronted him. His artistic ideals came into conflict with those of the two other great painters of his time, Michelangelo and Raphael. Michelangelo was twenty-three years his junior and Raphael thirty-one. They both learned much from Leonardo about light and shade and perspective, but Leonardo strove always for complete unity in his pictures: the total impression must always be simple and must rise to a climax. He was never quite sure that he was doing the thing in the best way it could be done. Michelangelo, with none of the doubts

of da Vinci, painted swiftly, surely, powerfully, but often riotously, lacking the power of mature reflection that gave Leonardo such unity. Raphael, too, painted without the doubts that beset Leonardo, and his faultless drawings show it. Raphael saw life simplified and conventionalized. Leonardo, always the minute and penetrating observer, saw it in its actual complexity. These three first-rank artists were rivals in their own day. Michelangelo and Raphael completed their works and won the highest praise of their contemporaries, while Leonardo almost never completed anything because he strove for a perfection he could not achieve, and as a result he saw the younger men winning glory while he was left lonely and still laboring.

A Lonely Man. To aid him against this opposition Leonardo had few friends and no family. He was a lone figure in his age. Although not a recluse or a hermit or a misanthrope, he was still alone by necessity, for "there was no man, neither found he any to comfort him." He loved to lose himself in the crowded market place or cathedral, but then always as one aloof, an observer, not one of the crowd. Still more, perhaps, he loved to wander all alone, observing every detail of tree or flower, bird or insect, cloud or shadow that happened to catch his attention. In his notebook he wrote: "If you will be alone, you will be all your own. . . . . If you are accompanied by even one companion, you belong only half to yourself, or even less, in proportion to the thoughtfulness of his conduct." His own

life was so full that there was little need for friendship. Mother Nature and his art were his only great friends.

If there was an oasis in this desert of loneliness, it was in the person of Francesco Melzi, a pupil who became almost a son to him in the days of his old age. Francesco was his constant attendant and companion in his long illness, a kind of paralysis that eventually ended fatally. To him Leonardo left "all his books, instruments, and designs relative to his art and practice of painting," the whole priceless record of his thought outside of those few completed art works that have come down to us. The only other friends remembered in his will were his faithful servants and the poor of the village. He also left to his unbrotherly half-brothers, who had treated him so shabbily, the sum of four hundred ducats.

He never married, nor have we any record that he ever loved a woman. Many writers have flirted with the alluring possibilities in the relations between Leonardo and Mona Lisa (La Gioconda). We have had some small-town gossip about it, and some romancing, but the only basis for such a notion is that bewitching smile which may bear witness to a rapprochement between the tender insight of the artist and the illusive charm of the model who patiently sat for three years.

Achievements. We cannot detail his life and works in chronological order. But we can give a bare outline of the outward events and then consider the more important results of his toil irrespective of dates.

From 1484 to 1499 he lived in Milan in the service of Ludovico. When the latter fell from power and Milan became a football of war, Leonardo returned to his native Florence, where his patron was Soderini, the Gonfalonier of the city. In 1506 Soderini gave him a three months' leave of absence to go back to Milan on condition that Leonardo would pay a fine of one hundred fifty gold ducats if he overstayed his leave. In Milan, Leonardo busied himself as engineer and hydraulic architect and in trying to complete a few of the pictures he had begun under Ludovico. He overstayed his leave, and a polite but spirited controversy arose between the heads of the two cities, each claiming the artist and begging the other to release him. He finally returned to Florence, but his stays in that or any other city thereafter were brief. In 1512 he again went to Milan. In 1514 he visited Rome, where he found neither artistic inspiration nor honor nor financial recompense for his work under Pope Leo X. In 1515, Milan being again in the hands of the French and reasonably quiet, he returned there as court painter to Francis I, ruler of the city and a great lover of art. For the first time in his life Leonardo lived in something like luxury, but not for long. The privations and loneliness and disappointments of his career had told upon his health. He fell into his last sickness, and died in France in 1519.

But the calendar of his life has little significance. The important thing is what the man did—no matter

where or when. The bare catalogue of his accomplishments leaves one breathless with wonder. That catalogue may be gleaned from his notebooks. In the museums of Europe these notebooks, twenty-one in number and containing about four thousand pages, written in reverse script so that they must be read in a mirror, are preserved in their original form. They are copiously illustrated with drawings and sketches not only of his paintings but of his inventions and scientific studies. They constitute the supreme monuments of his genius and corroborate the almost incredible traditions of his versatility—a versatility unequaled in the history of the world.

The Empirical Method. Underlying this versatility, as the notebooks show, is Leonardo's fundamental contribution: his discovery of the modern empirical method in science. He divorced himself completely from the traditional methods, which depended upon precedent and authority, and made observation and experience his sole guides in his search for knowledge and in his application of it. This empirical method he began in his boyhood, as we have seen, when, not understood by his fellows, he forsook school and studied flowers and trees and clouds and insects. He applied it throughout his life to the whole gamut of phenomena then open to investigation, with such results that could they have been carried to their logical conclusions they would undoubtedly have led to some of the epoch-making discoveries which created the scientific era.

In his notebooks he defined this scientific method in these words: "Those sciences are vain and full of errors which are not born of experience, mother of all certitude, and which do not terminate in observation; that is, whose origin or middle or end does not come through one of the five senses." "I will make experiment before I proceed because my intention is first to set forth the facts and then to demonstrate the reason why such experience is constrained to work in such fashion. And this is the rule to be followed by the investigators of natural phenomena: while nature begins from causes and ends with experience, we must follow a contrary procedure, that is, begin from experience and with that discover the causes." "He who scorns the certainty of mathematics will not be able to silence sophistical theories which end only in a war of words." "Where there is clamor there is no true knowledge because truth has a single ending and when that is made known the contest is ended forever." All this may sound simple and reasonable, even trite, to our ears, but Leonardo wrote it fifty years before Copernicus and a hundred years before Galileo and Bacon. No wonder that Ludwig calls him "the greatest pathfinder of the new occident." Applying this method to the physical sciences, he made greater advances in them than had been made since Archimedes in the third century before Christ.

Anatomist. In anatomy Leonardo dissected at least thirty bodies of men and women of various ages, making a special study of embryology. He observed the

circulation of the blood and the action of the heart as a pump and was aware that the blood returning to the heart in the veins was different from that leaving it in the arteries. He did not anticipate Harvey's definition of the laws of circulation, but he discovered the fact of circulation. He founded pictorial anatomy. Dr. William Hunter, a great Scotch anatomist, wrote, "Leonardo was the best anatomist at that time in the world."

Astronomer. In astronomy and applied mathematics he threw overboard the Ptolemaic astronomy and came to the conclusions that the sun does not move, that the sun is much larger than the earth, that the earth is not the center of the solar system, and that the moon is not luminous but merely reflects the sun's light. He did not anticipate Copernicus, but he was his forerunner.

Geologist. In geology he refuted the literal interpretation of the biblical account of a universal flood and proved by fossil remains of aquatic animals high in the maritime Alps that those very mountains had lain under an ocean for an age.

Geographer. As a geographer he knew that the world was round. In the service of Cesar Borgia he prepared some accurate maps of certain sections of Italy. In all these fields he seemed to leap from the Middle Ages into the modern age of science, and this fact alone marks him as one of the great pioneers along the trail of man's intellectual progress.

Inventor. We have already seen something of his inventive genius. For his patron Ludovico, Duke of

Milan, he contrived and built military tanks, mortars, chariots, and pontoons. He engineered enormous canal systems. For the city of Florence he proposed a town-planning scheme involving streets on two levels—the upper level for pedestrians, the lower for commercial traffic. He invented parachutes, diving bells, submarines, chimneys, glass ovens, and machines for shearing sheep, spinning, and pottery making. He constructed a block and tackle to lift heavy weights. He made a variety of mills and scales, concave mirrors and pendulums. Emil Ludwig, who devotes two pages to a catalogue of these and other of Leonardo's inventions, says:

He was the first man since Archimedes to record the principles of the lever. In drawings which he made for the study of difficult problems in physics, he developed the law of the conservation of energy. . . . . Before Galileo he discovered the law of virtual velocity. He stated the principles of gyration and the vortex, and the law of communicating vessels. He was the founder of hydrostatics and of the entire science of hydraulics. He understood the undulatory motion of the sea, and applied its principles of transmission and reflection to sound and light; he measured sound waves, explained the echo and the vibration of overtones four hundred years before Helmholtz and Herz. . . . . He explained the eye as a camera obscura, recognized the functions of the lens and of the retina and the mechanics of sight.[3]

[3] Emil Ludwig: *Genius and Character,* pp. 155, 156. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927. Used by permission.

Artist. Yet we know him best as an artist, and especially as the painter of the "Mona Lisa" and "The Last Supper"—probably the two most famous pictures in the world. "The first aim of the painter," said Leonardo in his treatise on painting, "must be to give to the smooth surface of his pictures the appearance of a relief standing out from the background. He who surpasses all the others in this point deserves to be called the greatest." He achieved this effect in these two great pictures. Let us speak here, and briefly, only of "The Last Supper." Leonardo began this picture in 1496, soon after he went to Milan. He worked at it alternately with the great equestrian statue of Sforza and was constantly interrupted to do scores of odd jobs for Ludovico. In spite of these interruptions, in two years by prodigious labor he had completed it—at least concluded his own work upon it. Adolf Rosenberg thus describes the picture and the scene when Leonardo stood before that wall in Milan on which his masterpiece was to be executed:

When he saw that space before him, he made up his mind that his picture should, as it were, break through the wall and become an ideal expansion of the refectory, in order to let the eyes of the monks look into the distance, into eternity, whilst they were enjoying things earthly. The architectural frame of his picture aims at expanding the real space. The great master of the laws of perspective lets the side walls incline at an obtuse angle towards the wall in the background, in which are three windows with a view of a mountain

landscape of Lombardy in the soft evening light. This is the ideal background for the heroic resignation of the Saviour who stands there like a rock amongst the breakers raging around him. Every one of the disciples shows his temperament, his disposition, his innermost feelings, not only in the face but also by the hands stretched out towards his Lord and Master. . . . . The very movements of the hands distinguish the man ready to commit a rash and angry deed from the gentle sufferer who is willing to follow his Master even unto death—the man of a sanguine temperament who cannot bring himself to believe in the monstrous crime, from the skeptic who foresaw everything, and now feels a certain satisfaction in seeing his dark forebodings fulfilled. The eloquence of the hands . . . . is enhanced to the highest degree by the expression of the features. Every face is a mirror reflecting the drama of the soul.[4]

Leonardo never completed the face of Jesus because, as Vasari says, he did not venture to render the heavenly divinity which ought to mark the portrait of Christ. He used to tremble with agitation when he worked upon it. A witness, the novelist Bandello, who often visited Leonardo while he worked upon the painting, says:

I have often seen him come very early and watched him mount the scaffolding—because the Last Supper is somewhat high above the floor—and then he would not put down his brush from sunrise till the night set in, yes, he forgot eating and drinking, and painted without ceasing. Then, two, three or four days would pass without his doing anything, and yet he spent daily one

[4] Rosenberg, Adolf, *Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 72, 73.

or two hours before the picture, lost in contemplation, examining, comparing, and gauging his figures. I have also seen him at midday during the greatest heat, prompted by a whim or fancy, leave the old castle where he was modeling his wonderful equestrian statue, and hasten to Santa Maria delle Grazie. There he would mount the scaffolding, take up his brush, do one or two strokes to one of the figures, and then turn his back and go away.[5]

Great as are the few pictures which have come down to us from Leonardo, the art critics are agreed that it is not by looking at them but by studying the sketches in his notebooks that we may learn to understand how great an artist he was and what a powerful influence he had on his contemporaries.

His Failures. In spite of this record of achievement, he came toward the end of his days to look at his life as a failure, and not without some reason. His "Mona Lisa" he never finished, although it is not easy for uninitiated eyes to see what there is left to do. "The Last Supper" was already perishing fifty years after it was painted because he experimented with it by using oil paint on a clay base over a damp wall.[6] "The Battle

[5] Rosenberg, Adolf, *Leonardo da Vinci*, pp. 68, 69.

[6] It may be worth while here to recount what has happened through the centuries to this one masterpiece. For it is fairly typical of the history of many such masterpieces and illustrates why so few originals remain to us. Leonardo painted "The Last Supper" upon a stone wall whose outer part was exposed to the injuries wrought by rain and weather. The stones contained nitre which absorbed the damp. This dampness in time began to injure the picture from behind. A few years later floods increased this damage by penetrating the refectory itself. Leonardo was not content

of Anghieri," another great mural, which he painted in a contest with Michelangelo, also perished through his experimenting with new materials. As for his sculpture, though contemporaries who saw his work have reported its greatness, no single example of it has come down to us. His masterpiece, the gigantic equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza, had been destroyed by French soldiers before Leonardo died. It might have survived the attacks of the soldiers had it been cast in bronze. It was all ready for casting, but the war with France had so depleted the treasury of Ludovico that he could not afford to pay for the bronze. The great system of irrigation that Leonardo was engineering perished in the same way—from want of funds in time of war. The greatest mechanical dream of his life, a

with the reliable technique of a fresco, but desiring to outdistance his rivals, made use of certain oils to secure more delicate effects, especially in modeling the heads. But these oils proved less enduring than the fresco, so that when Vasari saw the picture in 1556 he called it a "tarnished patch of colors." The monks themselves added to the damage by cutting a door through the wall in order to have easier access to their kitchen. The top of this door destroyed the feet of the Saviour and damaged the whole picture. A few years later an imperial scutcheon was nailed over the door, covering also a large part of the figure of Jesus. During the following century various inefficient "restorers" removed the existing remains of Leonardo's oils. Then came the French invasion of 1796 when the soldiers used the refectory as a stable and afterward as a barn and then as a prison. The soldiers amused themselves by throwing mud and missiles at the heads of the apostles. Thus the very descendants of the French archers who destroyed Leonardo's great equestrian statue of Sforza three centuries earlier dealt a last blow to his second masterpiece. Had it not been that pupils of Leonardo or other artists of his time made early copies of this and other masterpieces, they would be entirely lost. But the quality of the copies alone is sufficient to rank him as one of the greatest artists of all time.

flying machine built like a giant bat on principles that aviation in the main has validated, came to naught through the impatience of his mechanic to try out the machine. Leonardo seems to have contemplated a sort of encyclopedia, but procrastination and the weakness of age and the new enterprises with which he was occupied up to the end left his vast knowledge only in partly digested notes scattered through his papers and vague accounts of how he intended to expand certain subjects. All this may be set down as a record of failure.

The explanation of these failures lies, of course, in part in the fact that he attempted a greater variety of tasks than most men could accomplish in four or five lifetimes; in part, to the way he was continually thwarted and frustrated by his patron princes, who dragged him from one trivial job to another and lent his services to their relatives for designing costumes for balls, decorations for garden parties, and a legion of such tasks that should have been given to lesser men. Then, too, Leonardo was always attempting the impossible. Even in his best paintings he saw such faults compared to his concept that he sometimes abandoned them for long periods. In his notes he wrote, "The supreme misfortune is when theory outstrips performance." That was his own plight.

His Religion. The religious convictions of such an extraordinary man are bound to be significant, for religion is that which integrates life and gives it meaning and direction. Although Leonardo during his last sick-

ness received the final rites of the Catholic Church, he did not concern himself much with organized religion during his life. He was apparently aloof from the moral struggles of men and did not need the offices of the church. Little wonder when we think of the condition of the church in those days and of the example set by the Borgias! People called Leonardo an atheist and even Antichrist, but he kept his peace, attended to his own affairs, and thus escaped the Inquisition. Had he been tried as a heretic he would probably have been found guilty by the standards of the Inquisition. His character was "strongly religious and singularly beautiful. He was fond of animals and would not eat them. He bought caged birds in the markets and set them free. He lived frugally but protested that he was not poor. 'I am not poor,' he said; 'only he is poor whose wants are many.' He frequently associated with the aristocracy of his day, but he remained uncorrupted. In his diary he wrote . . . . 'intellectual passion drives away all lusts.' " [7]

God to him was the First Mover, the Eternal Necessity. He found God through his scientific researches more than through the ordinary channels of religion. Those researches led him to the highest admiration and veneration of the creative power in Nature and in man. He recognized the hand of God in the smallest works of Nature. Among his papers after his death was

[7] Wallace, Archer, *The Religious Faith of Great Men*, p. 19.

found the following confession of faith, on a sheet along with some anatomical drawings:

> And thou, oh man, who through this work of mine learnest to understand the marvellous works of nature, if thou believest it to be a crime to dissect the human body, consider how infinitely more wicked it is to take the life of a man; and if his outer form appears to be wonderfully made, consider that it is like nothing in comparison with the soul that dwells in this body, for this, whatever it may be, is a thing of God. Let it therefore dwell in His work according to His will and good pleasure, and do not let your anger or your wickedness destroy a life; for verily, he who does not value life, does not deserve to possess it.[8]

As Rosenberg says: "These are golden words dictated by true love of humanity, which sound to us like good tidings. After nearly four hundred years' work philosophy has not advanced much more."

Sources of His Power. Whence came the power of Leonardo da Vinci? We can make only the most humble attempts at an answer. The world has not produced two such men. Simple mutations of human factors recur many thousands of times, but the most complex mutations occur but once in a billion trials. In Leonardo there were factors of such complexity that they elude analysis. We can see only the more obvious elements. It might be better, then, simply to stand uncovered in reverent gratitude in the presence of this

[8] Rosenberg, Adolf, *Op. cit.*, p. 108.

lonely colossus. Yet Leonardo himself, when he stood before a great gift of Nature, was not content to offer thanks only. He sought to understand the forces that produced it. We may follow his example in this respect and at least attempt to trace back to its source the power that distinguishes the mature man.

From the land of his birth came a heritage of art. From his parents came his vigorous blood stream and strong physique. From his father he must have learned something of the virtue of accuracy, for accuracy was a prime requisite for a notary. From his mother's pitiful life probably came his impulse toward compassion for common folk. When his schoolfellows by their cruelty to animals shocked his sensitive nature and pushed him out of their group, he turned to a kinder friend, Mother Nature, and in his most impressionable years began to study the flight of birds, the life of insects, the movement of clouds and stars. This early development of his capacity for observation, coming as a by-product of solitude, may be the most significant factor in his boyhood days. Out of it grew his insatiable curiosity for more facts to observe. This curiosity and faculty of observation opened the doors of Biaga, Verrocchio, and Toscanelli, pioneering scientists who became his teachers. Under their tutelage he gradually came to the conviction that the traditional lore that passed for knowledge was not knowledge, and that the whole universe was waiting for him to explore it. He would explore it not by reference to ancient authority

but by a new method—the disinterested method of scientific research. By this empirical method through long years of hard work and self-discipline, he came ultimately to have a knowledge surpassing that of any other man of his times. That knowledge was power.

In addition to all these fundamental factors in the strength of the man, there was in his art yet another source of power: he never lost the sense of wonder that makes the expanding curiosity of children so delightful. Mellowed by tenderness that came from hardship and suffering, he still retained throughout his life the child's wonder at the world.

To his capacity for observation, his empirical method, and his sense of wonder, add his kindliness, the simple way of life that kept his own wants few, his creative use of solitude, his humble reverence for the sacredness of human life and its Creator, and you have some partial explanation of the power of Leonardo da Vinci.

OLIVER CROMWELL

1599-1658

A MIGHTY man—and one of great contrasts. His hands were red with the blood of tens of thousands of his countrymen; yet he counted himself a follower of the Prince of Peace. He fought for democracy; yet he ruled England as an absolute dictator. He went into battle singing psalms; yet he ruthlessly murdered or despoiled and deported his defeated enemies. If Francis of Assisi is the representative of meek men who trust in love, Cromwell is the representative of proud men who trust in force.

The Nation and Times. The times seemed to call for force. Before we walk the psalm-singing soldier upon the stage, let us consider the scene and the antecedent action. Queen Elizabeth had died in 1603. During her golden reign the English had successfully resisted the Roman See. They had sunk the Spanish Armada and put an end to Spain's domination of the Atlantic and Mediterranean. They had sailed around the globe and

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established colonies which were to become the outposts of a vast empire. They had produced Shakespeare, Spenser, and Bacon.

But Elizabeth had been succeeded by James I (1603-1625), the first of the Stuarts. The accession had brought England and Scotland under one sovereign, but James was of such a character that the people were soon speaking of him as "Queen James" and of his predecessor as "King Elizabeth." Hume says that James had lofty notions about kingly dignity which he was totally unqualified by nature to sustain. His weak legs gave him an awkward, shambling gait, his eyes rolled in a disconcerting manner, his mouth was crooked, and he was given to drunkenness and profanity. He counted himself an author. One of his books expounded his belief in witchcraft, another his disbelief in the use of tobacco. He trembled at the sight of a drawn sword and had his own clothes thickly padded as a precaution against assassination. His favorite doctrine was quite naturally that of the divine right of kings.

Quite naturally, too, the people began to raise increasing questions about the divine right of kings in general and of this one in particular. He was constantly dissolving Parliament on the ground that its members discussed subjects which he had commanded them to let alone. These subjects had to do with taxation, lawmaking, and civil liberties. James tried to usurp the prerogatives of Parliament in these matters. Thus began a series of conflicts between sovereign and peo-

ple which was to lead in a few years to civil war and the emergence of a new form of government under Oliver Cromwell.

Charles I (1625-1649) succeeded James. He also succeeded in widening the breach between the throne and the people. Like James he made much of the divine right of kings, basing the doctrine on the words of scripture in Ecclesiastes 8:4, "Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?" He dissolved his first two Parliaments because they insisted on discussing their grievances instead of voting him appropriations. Now dissolving Parliaments, as even the obstinate Charles was forced to admit, may be a fine swish of the robes of kingly authority, but it raises no money for the royal treasury. For some months Charles lived on forced loans, but eventually he was obliged to convene Parliament again.

This time the representatives of the people came prepared to curb their king's tyrannical temper. The Houses met and drew up a Petition of Right. "Sign this," they said, "and we will vote appropriations for you." The Petition reaffirmed the ancient rights of the English people as defined in the Magna Charta and in the laws passed during the reigns of Edward I and Edward III. It provided against four abuses of the king's power: (1) raising money by forced loans, benevolences, and taxes unauthorized by Parliament; (2) imprisonment without due cause shown; (3)

quartering of soldiers in private homes; (4) trial without jury. Charles hesitated long but finally (1628) gave his consent to the Petition. Thereupon Parliament granted the sums he asked.

But the King did not keep his part of the agreement. He dissolved Parliament again and proceeded to violate every provision of the Petition of Right. For the next eleven years he ruled as an irresponsible despot without once calling Parliament. He substituted for representative government three iniquitous courts—the Council of the North, the Star Chamber, and the High Commission Court—all subservient to his wishes, and all functioning without juries. With the aid of these courts he wrought such havoc among the people's liberties, both civil and religious, that thousands emigrated to America in search of freedom and security. Tradition has it that one young man who intended to join these emigrants was detained just as he was about to board ship by a new order from Charles forbidding any persons to leave the country without a royal license. If the tradition is true, despotism here overreached itself, for Charles detained his own executioner. That young man was Oliver Cromwell!

But the King knew nothing of this young Cromwell and plunged headlong on his tyrannical way. At last he went beyond the endurance of the long-suffering people of Scotland. Acting under the advice of Archbishop Laud, head of the Anglican Church, he tried to impose Episcopal bishops upon that Presby-

terian country. He designated a Sunday on which the liturgy of the Church of England should be introduced into all Scottish churches. To the Scots this seemed little less than a forced restoration of the popery they had banished. According to one well-known story, a determined little woman, Jenney Geddes, flung a stool at the head of the bishop in Edinburgh as he began to read the Episcopal liturgy in her home church. This was but the first outburst of resistance (1637). The movement quickly spread, and men and women of all classes bound themselves together under a solemn oath to resist any further encroachment on their religious liberties.

Charles attempted to crush this resistance by force. The Scotch, with all the fiery enthusiasm of a holy cause, began to arm. The King resolved to wage war against them, but wars cost money, and Charles, unable to raise it by his recent methods, again convened Parliament.

The Lords and Commons, however, were more concerned with the many grievances of the people against the crown than with voting money for a war for which they had no stomach. Once more Charles dissolved the body. The Scots now pressed their advantage and sent an army across the English border. Charles, his treasury empty and his army on the point of sedition, was obliged to summon Parliament—the one known as the Long Parliament from the fact that it sat for twelve years and legally existed for eight more.

This Parliament began not by voting money for the war but by impeaching Strafford, the King's chief lieutenant and strong-arm man. It went on to pass a new law to the effect that the two Houses could not be dissolved except by their own consent. Further, it abolished the three iniquitious courts Charles had set up and declared illegal some of the taxes he had imposed.

Meanwhile, insurrection broke out in Ireland. The Irish Catholics tried to wipe out the Protestant colony planted in Ireland during the reign of James I. It was a bloody affair, and thousands of English and Scottish settlers perished miserably.

And now Charles committed the ultimate in despotism. Making a charge of treason, he attempted to seize five of the leading members of Parliament. The nation could not forgive this act of royal folly. With such watchwords as "Privilege of Parliament" and "To your tents, O Israel!" the citizens rallied around their representatives, formed an armed escort for them, and conveyed them back to the Parliament buildings by way of the River Thames. The river itself was filled with boats of other armed citizens determined to have done with the tyranny of their King. Charles, frightened by the uprising, fled from London and took refuge in York. The civil war had begun.

Parliament now demanded new guarantees against the King's encroachments. It insisted that such matters as the control of the militia, the education and

marriage of the King's children, and the nature of the services in the Established Church should be under the direction of its two Houses. Charles refused and summoned all who wished to be loyal to him to gather to his royal standard.

This divided the country into two parties: the Royalists or Cavaliers, and the Parliamentarians or Roundheads, so called because they clipped their hair close to their heads. There was no apparent reason for this tonsorial style except the desire to be unlike the Cavaliers, who affected long, flowing locks. The Cavaliers were for the most part members of the Established Church, the Roundheads of the Presbyterian and Independent (later Congregational) Churches. The latter constituted the chief body of Puritans.

For three years the war continued without success to either side until the Roundheads promoted to the leadership of their army a daring colonel of a regiment of psalm-singing cavalrymen—Oliver Cromwell.

* * *

And now it is high time that we go back to the beginnings of this man and see of what stuff he is made.

Cromwell's Heredity. He was born April 25, 1599, in Huntingdon in the eastern part of England just about a year before the birth of Charles I in Scotland. The Cromwell family, of Welsh origin, was of considerable importance in Huntingdon. Its estates had been

built up under the Tudors largely from lands confiscated from the Catholic Church in general and the Augustinian monks in particular. Oliver's grandfather, Sir Henry Cromwell, had been knighted by Henry VIII, and his uncle, Sir Oliver, by James I. Huntingdon was usually represented in Parliament by a Cromwell. The ancestors of young Oliver had been marked for their intense loyalty to the Protestant Church and to their king.

Oliver's immediate family was of the middle class, well-to-do and better educated than the average in their station. His father, Robert Cromwell, was a serious and rather dreamy man with indifferent health. He had matriculated at Queen's College. He had also spent some time at Lincoln's Inn studying law. In Huntingdon he became successively bailiff, justice of the peace, trustee of the free school, and commissioner of drainage. He once represented the town in Parliament. He had an income of about three hundred pounds a year (equivalent to about five thousand dollars in modern American money) derived from his lands, including a dovecot and a brewery. His portrait presents him as a man with a gentle face, with long hair flowing over a plain white collar.

Oliver's mother, Elizabeth Cromwell, was of Scottish descent. Her great-uncle was the Catholic prior to Ely who abjured Catholicism and became the first Protestant dean of the cathedral. Her father had farmed the cathedral lands. She was a widow at the

time of her marriage to Robert Cromwell. She is described as a capable woman, determined, shrewd, practical, and vigorous. She bore Robert ten children—seven daughters and three sons. Two of the sons died in childhood, and thus Oliver was reared in a home in which he was the only boy among seven sisters. Elizabeth managed her large family well. Cromwell inherited his qualities of vigor and determination from her rather than from his father.

Early Home. We know little of the first seventeen years of Oliver's life beyond the fact that he grew up a normal, active boy, sharing with other boys in the universal pranks and games of childhood. Some of the biographers relate stories of apple-stealing and pigeon-stealing. One fairly authenticated tale has it that a local Anglican clergyman once rescued Oliver from drowning and in later years expressed regret for it. Oliver's home, like most in the neighborhood, was religious and he doubtless took part in its daily devotions and attended church regularly on Sundays. Twice during Oliver's childhood his uncle, Sir Oliver, sumptuously entertained King James I at Huntingdon. Young Oliver must have been present on these occasions. On one of them it is said that King James brought along his son, Prince Charles (later Charles I), and that Oliver quarreled with the young prince and bloodied his nose.

Early Schooling Under a Great Teacher. Oliver attended the Free School of Huntingdon, an institution

which dated from the twelfth century, and there came under the influence of a remarkable man, Thomas Beard, the school's headmaster. Beard was a bachelor of divinity and master of arts from Cambridge, a staunch Puritan, and a progressive educator. His curriculum included not only training for the mind but for the body and spirit as well. To this end he supplemented the conventional studies in spelling, reading, mathematics, Latin and Greek, with tennis, wrestling, running, swimming, riding, and hunting and shooting with the longbow. Oliver excelled in these activities. Beard even introduced dancing and taught the youthful Puritans how to praise God with the rhythm of their feet. He also had an interest in drama and directed his students in the production of plays on classical subjects. In one of these plays Cromwell had a rôle in which he spoke these lines:

This crown and robe
My brow and body circles, and invests;
How gallantly it fits me, sure the slave
Measured my head that wrought this coronet.
They lie who say complexions cannot change,
My blood's ennobled, and I am transformed
Into the sacred temper of a KING.

As he delivered this speech, Cromwell took up the crown and placed it upon his own head.

The King James Version of the Bible was first published in 1611, when Cromwell was twelve years of age. Beard probably used this version in his school.

Cromwell's frequent quotations from it in later life bear witness to the fact that he must have memorized much of it in his youth. Beyond this instruction in the Bible, the headmaster exerted a profound influence on young Cromwell in the direction of a radical Puritanism. Beard was one of a group who sought to disestablish the Anglican Church. He had written two treatises on the theme that the Pope is the Antichrist. Further, he had published a small volume entitled *The Theater of God's Judgments* in which he collected from history examples of the judgments of God against notorious sinners, both great and small, but particularly against those in high places who had misused their power and wrought injustice to men. Young Cromwell and the other students under Beard were taught that men had a right and a duty to curb such injustice among rulers, even to the extent of binding kings and nobles in chains. We can see here at least one of the elements which made Cromwell the iron man that he became. Finally, Beard personally prepared Cromwell for Cambridge and doubtless influenced his family to enter him in the Sidney-Sussex College. This was a Puritan college whose master, Dr. Samuel Ward, had been one of the scholars responsible for the version of the Bible so oddly associated with the name of King James I. It was a college which Archbishop Laud had denounced as "one of the nurseries of Puritanism."

College and Travel. Cromwell entered Sidney-Sus-

sex at Cambridge in his seventeenth year on the day that William Shakespeare died—April 23, 1616. He spent but one year there and did not distinguish himself. His father died in 1617, and Oliver discontinued his studies at Cambridge shortly thereafter. However, he did not return to Huntingdon. The biographers are not agreed upon where he spent the next three years, but it seems that part of it at least he devoted to reading law at Lincoln's Inn and part to travel on the Continent. He may have spent some months with a Continental British military force, and acquired some knowledge of military discipline thereby. There is some evidence to support the belief that in these youthful years away from home he allowed himself considerable license. Many years later he wrote a letter to a cousin, saying: "You know what my manner of life hath been. Oh, I lived in and loved darkness and hated the light; I was the chief of sinners." Whether or not this refers to a season of wild-oats-sowing or simply reflects the normal Puritan conscience is a matter of conjecture.

Marriage and Later Home Life. In 1620, at the age of twenty-one, he married Elizabeth Bouchier, the daughter of a successful fur-dealer and leather-dresser. Morley describes her as "a simple and affectionate character, full of homely solicitudes, intelligent, modest, thrifty, and gentle, but taking no active share in the fierce stress of her husband's life." She bore Oliver nine children, seven of whom—four sons and

three daughters—survived infancy. Cromwell took her as his bride to Huntingdon, and there they lived on the family estate with his mother and his six sisters. It was probably just as well that Elizabeth was less assertive and determined in personality than her mother-in-law. Two strongly-opinionated women in the one home is the Chinese definition of war, and this insight is not confined to the Chinese. At any rate, the Cromwell home at Huntingdon was a happy one. Even when he became dictator over England, with a reputation that struck terror to the hearts of Irish villages which lay in his path, it is refreshing to find him writing letters to his wife beginning thus, "My Dearest: I could not satisfy myself to omit this post, although I have not much to write; yet indeed I love to write to my Dear, who is very much in my heart." She never interfered with his plans but concentrated her attention on giving their children the best she could in education and character training and on bolstering Oliver's courage in his melancholy hours.

During the first few years following his marriage he took care of his father's estate. Up to this point there was nothing to indicate that he purposed or expected to do anything else for the remainder of his days. Essentially an outdoor man, he loved sports and physical activities rather than books. He developed slowly. But in his mind and heart were germinating the seeds of Puritanism with its passionate devotion to liberty, to self-discipline, and to righteousness. His

home and the teaching of Thomas Beard in the Free School of Huntingdon had nourished those seeds. Throughout England human liberties were increasingly under attack by a despotic king. That attack was striking closer and closer at the principles the Puritans had been taught to hold dearer than life itself. Even in the year of Cromwell's marriage, one hardy band of men and women had chartered the "Mayflower" and sailed away from intolerable conditions in England to plant a new colony on the stern and rockbound coast of America.

Conversion Experience. As the King's tyrannical practices increased and the rift between his followers and his opponents widened, hard times fell upon the people, especially upon small landowners. Cromwell found great difficulty in making his acres yield enough to support his growing household. Whether from worry over this, or from a maturing of the Puritan ideas within him, or from a combination of these and other causes, he went through a period of emotional disturbance. This was somewhere around his twenty-eighth year. It took the form of deep brooding and extreme melancholy, followed by mystical religious experiences. He frequently believed he was dying. On one occasion he was certain a spirit had come to him, assuring him that he would live and some day become the greatest man in England.

Elected to Parliament. After this inner turmoil he manifested a marked scrupulousness in both private

and public life. He took a larger share of responsibility in the civic affairs of Huntingdon. His neighbors looked with more and more respect upon the uncompromising integrity of his character. In 1628, when he was twenty-nine years of age, they elected him their representative in Parliament. He appeared in the House of Commons poorly dressed and rough in manner, more of a dirt farmer than a country gentleman. This was the Parliament which had presented to Charles the Petition of Right. Cromwell witnessed the storm it evoked. He doubtless took an interest in that debate but was not stirred to speak until it dealt with matters of religion. In his first speech he denounced a bishop who had encouraged a minister in his diocese in preaching the doctrine of the divine right of kings. A month after this speech the session ended in scenes of tumultuous violence. King Charles dissolved Parliament and did not convene it again for another eleven years. Cromwell returned to his home.

Desert Years. What he had seen and heard in his few months in London had stirred deep passions within him. He saw that the struggle in which he and his colleagues in Parliament were engaged was no passing political squabble. It involved fundamental principles affecting human rights, even the freedom of conscience itself. It was a clash between God and Caesar. In that issue every man must take sides. Only cowards could remain neutral. Cromwell could not be neutral. He

was wholeheartedly on the side of the Puritans. But as yet he had heard no call to take a leader's part in the struggle. His depleted estate engrossed most of his attention. However, he took an active share in the civic life of the community. Twice he was arrested: once for omitting to go through the customary ceremony of knighthood, and again for the violent language he used in denouncing a local lawyer who had been the leader in changing the old democratic government of Huntingdon into a small oligarchy. In both cases Cromwell spoke and acted in behalf of the commoners. After three years at Huntingdon, unable longer to maintain a living on his farm there, he was forced to sell the place. He contemplated joining the emigrants to America. Possibly, as already related, he was stopped only by the decree of Charles I. Had he gone, the whole history of England and the Western world might have been different.

As it was, he bought a small acreage a few miles eastward at St. Ives, removed his wife and six children to it in May, 1631, and settled down to the prosaic business of grazing cattle. For the next five years he devoted himself to this task. It was a decided step down in the social and civic scale. At Huntingdon he had been a leading citizen, a burgess, a justice of the peace, a member of Parliament. At St. Ives he was only an obscure farmer, almost a forgotten man.

They were difficult years—a desert period. Nearly every life has such years. What one does with them

determines in no small measure where he goes when the desert is behind him. Cromwell spent his in four ways: (1) in tending his fields and cattle, (2) in cultivating his religious life, (3) in resisting Bishop Laud's attacks upon religious freedom, and (4) in reading the records and books of the Thirty Years' War then raging. Each morning, before starting his day's work in the fields, he gathered his family around him and spent the first hours in Bible study and prayer. Was this only a pious escape mechanism in which he sought comfort, as his detractors would have us believe? That would hardly account for the growth in character which a few years later earned him the name "Ironsides." Rather it was the means by which a man, troubled about his health, the welfare of his family, and the liberties of his country, sought understanding and strength. He found little help in the cold and formal ritual of the Anglican Church, so he attended one of the "lectureships" which the more vigorous Puritans were establishing throughout England at this time. A "lectureship" was a preaching mission carried on by zealous Puritan clergymen who worked much in the fashion of John Wesley's preachers a century later. The zeal of these evangelists and their tendency to apply their religious principles to current political and social issues brought them under the condemnation of Bishop Laud who tried to suppress them by cutting off their support. Cromwell helped to raise subscriptions for the one which he attended so that the gospel as he under-

stood it might continue to be preached. The Thirty Years' War stirred him, as it stirred all defenders of the rights of the people in those days. That he read the current books about it seems certain from the fact that in his own later military campaigns he used not only many of the tactics employed by Gustavus but also the same moral principles and, in some instances, the very words of the great Swedish commander. Thus in his desert years he disciplined himself in body, mind, and spirit. To such disciplined men a people turns for leadership in times of desperation.

Toward the end of this period a generous inheritance from his maternal uncle, Sir Thomas Steward, freed him from the pinch of poverty and enabled him to move to Ely, the cathedral town of Huntingdonshire. There for the next four years he cared for the estate that had been left to him and endeavored to carry on his uncle's civic and charitable enterprises. These included the management of the cathedral properties, the care of the poor, and the defense of the neighboring small landowners. The latter were in danger of losing their pasturage through a large flooding and drainage scheme projected by a group of wealthy men known as "Adventurers." Cromwell championed the cause of the small landowners, interviewed officials, petitioned the government, and made speeches in their behalf. He brought suit against the "Adventurers" and held off their project for five years until the King himself intervened, taking over the drainage project

and announcing that the small farmers could continue to use the land and its pasturage until the work was finally completed. Cromwell's enemies and the royalist newspapers contemptuously dubbed him "Lord of the Fens."

This staunch and persistent championship of the rights of the poor at Huntingdon, at St. Ives, and at Ely made Cromwell known and trusted as a friend of the oppressed throughout the eastern counties. He was now forty years of age and at the height of his physical and mental capacities. He had developed a certain rugged eloquence as a speaker. He had made himself a servant of Puritan principles and a master of Puritan phraseology. He had demonstrated his sympathy with those who earned their living by their daily toil. He was their rock of shelter in the storms of civil strife. It was altogether natural, therefore, that, when Parliament again convened after eleven years of Charles's dictatorial misrule, they should elect him as their representative.

The Years of Action. Cromwell did not stay long in Parliament. The time had come for action, not words. The events leading toward the great Civil War had followed one another with a terrible swiftness—Charles's violation of the provisions of the Petition of Right, his substitution of his subservient courts for representative government, his oppressive ship-money assessments, his attempt to force bishops and the Anglican liturgy on Presbyterian Scotland, his high-

handed effort to arrest the leaders of Parliament, the Irish rebellion, and finally his flight from London to York and his call for the Royalists to rally around him there. These had put out of the question any further discussion between the King and the Parliament. The people could not trust either the oral or the written word of their monarch. Either his will or theirs must be broken.

Leaders of the party of Parliament called for volunteers. Cromwell went back to the eastern counties and recruited a company of cavalry. He joined this company with others of the Roundheads, and for months the war went on with no decisive victory on either side. But such engagements as the Roundheads fought revealed their essential weakness. "Your troops," wrote Cromwell to Hampden, the leader of the Parliamentary forces, "are most of them decayed serving men and tapsters. . . . Do you think that the spirits of such base and mean fellows will ever be able to encounter gentlemen that have honor, courage, and resolution in them? You must get men of spirit . . . . or you will be beaten soon." Hampden replied that the idea was a good one but impracticable. Thereupon Cromwell determined to demonstrate its practicability.

Obtaining a leave of absence for himself and his troop, he hastened to the eastern counties (January 1643) "to raise such men as had the fear of God before them, and made some conscience of what they

did." Within nine months he had enlisted eleven hundren troopers, selecting them with greatest care. He required that they be honest, sober Christians—no Anabaptists. He established a rigid discipline among them. He permitted no plundering, levied fines for swearing, and ordered any soldier found drunk to be set in the stocks. Above all, he wanted only men of strong convictions. "I had rather have a plain russet-coated captain that knows what he fights for and *loves what he knows* than what you call a gentleman and is nothing else." To this basic requirement of character and discipline Cromwell added a fighting equipment far superior to that of other troops. He provided each man with a sword and a brace of pistols for offense and a light helmet and breastplate of iron for defense. He saw to it that his cavalrymen had good horses and that the men kept the horses in condition. In setting officers over these troops he paid no attention to social traditions but gave the commands to those most capable, whether footmen or servants or sons of gentlemen. Cromwell cultivated their religious spirit as much as their military discipline. When not fighting or drilling, they were reading the Bible or singing psalms. Never before had England seen such a fighting force. It was not long before Cromwell's men (as well as himself) were known as "Ironsides." Throughout the war they were never defeated.

Cromwell convinced not only Hampden but the whole country that a regiment of "men of religion" well

equipped and fighting for a cause they believed holy was invincible. The contrast between his Ironsides and the other regiments left no doubt on that score. The leaders of the Roundheads put through Parliament a measure known as "The Self-denying Ordinance" which enabled them to get rid of inefficient officers who had held their commands by virtue only of their social or political positions and to raise a new army of twenty-one thousand men, selected, officered, and disciplined according to Cromwell's idea. This army was known as "The New Model." Cromwell was given command of its cavalry. He trained this larger unit with the same religious and military disciplines he had used in the smaller one. He made every soldier from major to private feel that he had been called of the Lord to strike down all forms of tyranny in church and state.

His military exploits during the following months are among the most exciting in English history, but they do not concern us here. Our interest is solely in Cromwell himself and in the nature of the power he was developing. More than once his horse was killed under him. Frequently he was beset by forces far outnumbering his own. Often his troops were unpaid, hungry, and almost at the point of mutiny, but he held them together and revived their spirits with prayers and psalms. "God follows us with encouragements," he wrote. "They come in season; as if God should say, 'Up and be doing, and I will stand by and

help you!' There is nothing to be feared but our own sin and sloth."

The New Model army met and defeated the Royalists in decisive battles at Marston Moor (1644) and at Naseby (1645). King Charles fled from the field and took refuge in Scotland, but the Scots gave him up to the English Parliament, which held him captive for two years. What to do with such a king now that he had been beaten at arms? Parliament divided on the question. The Episcopalians favored restoring him to his old power, believing that he had been taught his lesson and would in the future respect the liberties of his people. The Presbyterians favored maintaining Charles as King, but under a constitutional monarchy limiting his powers. But the Independents, including Cromwell and the army, had no such notion. They had fought the King as the devil himself, and they had no faith that he would now become an angel. Yet the Independents in Parliament were in the minority.

Now came the first great choice for Cromwell between abiding by the will of the majority or following his own judgment. There is nothing so dangerous as a Puritan who is sure that God speaks through him. He is apt to mistake his own verdict for the voice of God. At first Cromwell violently opposed executing the King, but he gradually came to the conviction that there was nothing else to do. It was "the will of God." And so the minority, Cromwell abetting, planned and carried out the famous "Pride's Purge." They sta-

tioned at the door of Parliament a man named Pride with orders to exclude or arrest the members obnoxious to the army. This purge eliminated one hundred and forty-three members—practically all of the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians—and reduced the Commons to about fifty representatives, nearly all Independents. Those fifty, known as the "Rump Parliament," promptly passed a measure ordering that Charles be tried for treason. Charles denied the authority of the court established by this minority, but the court proceeded to the trial and within a week condemned him to death "as a tyrant, traitor, murderer, and public enemy . . . ." On the scaffold Charles bore himself with more kingly dignity than he had ever before shown and in his last words reiterated the one principle to which he had been faithful. He told the people that "their liberty and freedom consist in having government: . . . . it is not in their having a share in the government; that is nothing pertaining to them."

The ax fell; the executioner held aloft the gray head of the King and said: "This is the head of a traitor." Never before had the English beheld such a scene—their own king executed by the act of a section of their own people. A shudder ran through the vast assemblage. A shudder also ran through every royal court of Europe. If this thing should become a precedent, what royal head would be safe? The Czar of Russia promptly expelled the English envoy from his court; France and Holland expressed their

horror in acts of hostility. England stood confused and isolated.

Cromwell had now embarked upon a course from which he did not deviate—the application of force to accomplish his godly purpose of freeing his country from tyranny in church and state. Apparently it never occurred to him that there was any other method which God would have him use. Had he been better read in history he would have known that the men who had followed this course had eventually seen it betray them into the very tyrannies they sought to remedy. The means have a way of determining the end, but Cromwell believed that the end justified the means. Moreover, he now had behind him a disciplined army of nearly fifty thousand men, the best fighting unit in England. Together they had suffered and bled for what they had considered a holy cause. They had proved their power over King and Parliament. In the chaotic months that followed the King's execution they had no intention of relaxing their vigilance, lest the Royalists return to power and the fruits of victory be lost.

Troubles multiplied without and within the new government. A few weeks after the King's execution, the Rump Parliament voted to abolish both the office of the King and the House of Lords as useless and dangerous to the people of England and to establish a free state to be known as The Commonwealth. It lodged executive power in a Council of State composed of

forty-one members. It appointed John Milton as one of its secretaries.[1] This Council of State was nothing more than the Rump Parliament itself freed from the checks of the King and the House of Lords. Although its leading spirit was a great patriot, Sir Henry Vane, the enforcement of its decrees depended upon Cromwell and the army.

That enforcement was no small task, for the authority of the Council was denied not only by practically every foreign country but by Scotland and Ireland, and at home by the Episcopalians, the Presbyterians, and a new party known as the Levellers. Abroad, English merchants were imprisoned and English commerce attacked upon the seas. English ambassadors were murdered in Holland and in Spain. The Dutch prepared to aid the Royalists to restore the monarchy and mount Charles II upon the throne. Scotland, repenting her action in surrendering Charles I, actually proclaimed his son their King. The Royalists of Ireland followed suit. The Presbyterians of England refused to recognize the Council because their representatives, opposing the execution of the King, had been ousted from Parliament by Pride's Purge. They preached against the Commonwealth as a "heretical democracy" and demanded a constitutional monarchy. They would not work with the Episcopalians, for the latter were Royalists and wanted nothing but a restor-

[1] For Milton's part in the events following see pages 164 ff.

ation of the old order. The Levellers were socialistically inclined, some of them desiring only a limitation of the powers of government while others insisted on the abolition of private property. Thus the Commonwealth faced defiance abroad and division at home.

To Cromwell and the army, the Council of State now turned to bring order out of this chaos. And Cromwell applied force. He began with the Levellers whose doctrines had honeycombed his army. He sought out four of their ringleaders and brought them before the Council. "I tell you," he said, thumping the table, "you have no other way to deal with these men but to break them, or they will break you." The Council sent the four men to the Tower. Next, Cromwell suppressed a mutiny in three of his regiments. He took prisoner four hundred of the mutineers and had three officers shot.

Meanwhile, the Catholic Royalists had rebelled in Ireland. The Council made Cromwell Lord Lieutenant of that country and sent him to crush the rebellion. He stormed the town of Drogheda, and when it refused to surrender he massacred the entire garrison of three thousand men. He also butchered about a thousand who had sought asylum in a church. He then proceeded to capture other towns, although with lesser cruelties. His own words describe his treatment of captured garrisons: "When they submitted, their officers were knocked on the head, and every tenth man of the soldiers killed, and the rest shipped for Bar-

badoes." He regarded himself as God's Avenger—another Samuel called by the Lord to hew Agag in pieces. He justified his slaughters on the ground that the Catholics, a few years earlier, had massacred a considerable number of Protestants. Reporting to the Council of State, he wrote: "I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon those barbarous wretches who have imbued their hands in so much innocent blood, and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future." Following this murderous business, he confiscated the estates of the Catholic landowners—nearly two-thirds of the entire country—and granted them to his own soldiers, to creditors of the government, and to companies of English and Scotch settlers in the effort thus to secure Protestant ascendancy. As a matter of fact, however, it only inflamed the Irish against their English conquerors. To this day Ireland remembers this settlement of English and Scotch in Erin as "Cromwell's Curse." It has been the root of much of the trouble between England and Ireland for three hundred years.

Leaving the subjugation of Ireland to be completed by his generals, Cromwell, at the command of the Council, hurried to Scotland to quell the Scottish Royalists who had defied the authority of the Council and pledged their allegiance to Charles II. Unsuccessful at first, he retreated to Dunbar and waited for reinforcements. When they arrived he waited still longer until he was sure he could out-maneuver the army of the Scots.

Finally, when he was sure of his plans, on an early morning in September, as the sun was clearing the mist from the lowlands, he went before his army and urged them to the charge. "Let God arise," he cried, "and let his enemies be scattered! Like as the mist vanisheth so shalt thou drive them away!" The army responded with fanatic zeal, swept down upon the Scots, took ten thousand prisoners, and captured all their artillery. The Royalists in other parts of Scotland, however, did not surrender until a year later, when Cromwell won another decisive victory at Worcester. After this, Charles II fled to Normandy.

Returning to London, Cromwell made a triumphal entry at the head of his victorious army. Everywhere he was acclaimed as the savior of the country and one of the great military geniuses of history.

But triumphal entries and public acclamation soon pass. After them comes the prosaic business of government and administration. Milton now wrote,

Cromwell! our chief of men, who through a cloud
Not of war only, but detractions rude,
Guided by faith and matchless fortitude,
To peace and truth thy glorious way hast ploughed,
. . . . Peace hath her victories
No less renowned than war.

Cromwell resumed his seat in the Parliament and for a year and a half endeavored to hold his fiery spirit in restraint during the interminable debates of the legisla-

tors. He introduced several measures of reform of law and of church and saw them defeated or shelved. Most of the members were more interested in concocting plans to turn Parliament into a self-perpetuating body, with all the powers of state—legislative, judicial, executive, and military—in their own hands. Cromwell listened to their arguments for this proposal as long as he could but with growing impatience. When he saw it about to be put to the vote, he could restrain himself no longer. Turning to a colleague, he said, "This is the time. I must do it." Then, rising, he poured out upon the assembly such a strain of invective and denunciation as that body had never before heard. "I will put an end to your prating," he cried. "You are no Parliament. I say you are no Parliament." Calling a small band of musketeers, he drove the members from their seats and from the building. "It is you that have forced me to do this," he called after them, "for I have sought the Lord night and day that He would rather slay me than put me upon the doing of this work." Picking up the mace—the symbol of their authority—he asked, "What shall we do with this bauble?" and gave it to a soldier. Then he snatched up the bill that would have destroyed the last vestige of English democracy, put it under his cloak, and hurried away, locking the doors behind him. Thus ended the Long Parliament (1653).

Immediately, as head of the army and sole authority in the government, he summoned a new Parliament

of a hundred and fifty-six members, mainly religious zealots. Among these was a pious merchant, one Praise God Barebone, whose name so fitted the practices of this new body that the people dubbed it "Barebone's Parliament," for the members spent most of their time in prayer and scriptural exegesis and wearisome homilies. Cromwell had no fault to find with their piety, but he had become a man of action, and he knew that his country would not be saved until piety could be translated into justice and prayers into public service. So after five months the zeal of the Lord came upon him again, and he accepted this Parliament's resignation. He did not wish to be arbitrary, but he hated anarchy worse than arbitrariness, and the country was headed for anarchy.

He now turned to his army officers, who, like himself, wanted action and no more heavy conversation. They drew up for him a constitution called "The Instrument of Government" which provided for a single House, a Council of State, and an executive officer serving for life and bearing the title of "Lord Protector of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland." They would have preferred to make Cromwell king, but that title, because of its associations with the misrule of James I and Charles I, had become obnoxious. In fact, many religious people were substituting for "Thy Kingdom Come" in the Lord's prayer the words, "Thy *Commonwealth* come." Cromwell accepted the title of Lord Protector. It had a godly sound.

Protector. For the next five years until his death he ruled as a dictator. His power was virtually unlimited; yet on the whole he used it constructively. He gave the country the strongest and most enlightened government it had known since the days of Queen Elizabeth. His purpose, he declared, was "to make England great and to make her worthy of her greatness." He reorganized and rehabilitated the nation's finances, consolidated the governments of Scotland, Ireland, and England, patronized learning, encouraged public education, founded a new University of Durham, and did his best to bring peace among the warring religious sects. Politics and national issues had become so thoroughly entangled with sectarian differences and so fused by emotional heat that it was impossible to separate them. Strategy, as well as common sense, demanded toleration and conciliation. Cromwell applied both. Although he favored the Independents, Presbyterians, and Baptists, he insisted that the test of religion was not in doctrine but in conduct that gave evidence of "the grace of God." He made this test the basic requirement for all preachers whose salaries were to be paid by the state. Even his opponents admitted that he thus "did abundance of good to the church" and "saved many a congregation from ignorant, ungodly, drunken teachers." Catholics, Anglicans, Jews, and Quakers were persecuted minorities, but Cromwell's influence mitigated their sufferings. He refused to repress them so long as they did not plot

against the state. He permitted Jews to worship unmolested in private homes. Quakers in great numbers had been cast into prison as disturbers of the peace because of the violent trouble they had stirred up by their outspoken denunciation of all paid clergy and their "steeple houses." Cromwell, hearing that their leader, George Fox, was thus imprisoned, sent for him, conversed long and sympathetically with him (although Fox refused to doff his broad hat to him), ordered his release, and issued a general circular to all justices to the effect that Quakers in the future should be treated with tenderness rather than severity. By such conciliatory and constructive measures he tempered the passions of sectarian strife.

His foreign policy made England both respected and feared. Like Milton, he thought of England as the nucleus of the Kingdom of God. Her chief business was to extend that Kingdom. Yet, Cromwell's foreign activities were not missionary only. A keen and realistic statesman, he believed that England must have a strong economic foundation in order to fulfil her mission to the world. He promoted English trade along with Protestantism. When he became Protector, he inherited two wars—one with France and the other with Holland. He brought both to a successful conclusion, securing from France the amelioration of the condition of the Huguenots and the cession of the important seaport of Dunkirk on the Straits of Dover, and from Holland the acknowledgment of England's

supremacy upon the seas. He made treaties of peaceful trade with Sweden and Denmark. He formed an alliance with France against Spain, partly for economic advantage and partly to defeat Catholicism in its stronghold. He then captured Spain's treasure ships and wrested from her the Island of Jamaica in the West Indies. He sent the great Admiral Blake with a fleet into the Mediterranean to destroy nests of pirates and liberate their English prisoners. More important than all these, he increased and extended the colonies, dealing with them so considerately that to him more than to any other ruler belongs the credit of integrating them as Britian's overseas empire. "Cromwell's greatness at home," wrote Clarendon, "was a mere shadow of his greatness abroad." Yes, but let it be said again that he united and expanded England not for her glory, nor for his own ambition, but for God's service.

His Death. Five years of such labors and he was worn out in body and in spirit. At fifty-eight he was an old man. Domestic griefs had added to the hardships of his campaigns. One son had been killed in battle, and his favorite daughter had died after a lingering and painful illness. In spite of his victories, a sense of failure overwhelmed him, for he realized that his dictatorship rested upon the power of his sword rather than upon the affections or the confidence of his people. His last years were lived in fear of assassination against which he protected himself with a bodyguard, wore armor underneath his garments, and slept in a

different room almost every night. He knew, too, that the country he had united by force would fall to pieces again when his strong hand could no longer hold it together. There had been little that was permanent in this union; it had been effected by external compulsion rather than by internal growth. He had striven to free his country from the tyranny of a king but had only substituted the dictatorship of a military usurper. He felt that the masses of the people hated him as much as they had once hated Charles I, to whom they already referred as a "blessed martyr." Ague and fever attacked the Protector and burned away the last of his vitality. A few evenings before his end, one who watched by his bedside heard him utter a prayer—a prayer not for himself but for God's cause and God's people:

"Thou hast made me," he said, "though very unworthy, a mean instrument to do them some good, and Thee service. And many of them have set too high a value upon me, though others wish and would be glad of my death. But, Lord, however Thou dost dispose of me, continue and go on to do good for them. Give them consistency of judgment, one heart, and mutual love, and go on to deliver them. . . . . Teach those who look too much upon Thy instruments to depend more upon Thyself. Pardon such as desire to trample upon the dust of a poor worm, for they are Thy people too."

On September 3, 1658, at the age of fifty-nine, on the anniversary of his great victories of Dunbar and

Worcester, he died. Less than three years later, when the Monarchy had been restored, Cromwell's body was dug up and hanged upon a gallows "amid the universal outcry and curses of the people." In the evening it was taken down and the head cut off and set up on Westminster Hall, where it was exhibited for more than twenty years as a warning to others who might be tempted towards regicide.

Cromwell's Character and Power. Passing judgment on Cromwell's character has been a favorite indoor sport of historians for nearly three centuries. One biographer (Church) ranks him with Washington and Lincoln and holds that he stands high above all other statesmen. Another (Palgreave) describes him as a crafty and cruel usurper who set snares to entrap the people. A third pictures him as a great Christian, a fourth as a hypocrite. Milton, who worked with him for nearly twenty years and probably knew him better than any other, regarded him as "our chief of men" and wrote of him:

He was conspicuous for . . . . the strictness of his religious habits, and the innocence of his life; . . . . he soon became distinguished by the justness of his opinions, and the vigour and decision of his counsels. . . . . He had either extinguished, or by habit had learned to subdue, the whole host of vain hopes, fears, passions, which infest the soul. He first acquired the government of himself, and over himself acquired the most signal victories.

It may be as well to leave the final verdict to a higher judge.

But his worst enemy would admit that Cromwell was a man of power, and few, if any, would deny that that power was rooted in the confidence his fellow men had in his character. They had seen him discipline that character through forty years of hard work and honest effort in lowly capacities before he assumed public leadership. They had known his deep devotion to the Puritan cause in which his home and his first teacher—Thomas Beard—had schooled him. They had watched him humble his own will to do the will of God as he understood it. They had knelt with him in prayer in the dark hours of their own trial. They had risen with him to sing psalms of praise of their Creator and Redeemer. They had shared with him the Christian's dream of a Kingdom of God on earth, where tyranny and oppression would be replaced by freedom and justice, and men of good will would dwell together in peace. When such a comrade finally felt stirring within him the call of Almighty God to rise and deliver them from their bondage, who but the cowardly would not follow him to the very gates of hell? With such a leader to command them, they would rout the enemies of the Lord, cut them to pieces if need be, and establish the Kingdom of Heaven in England, and thus extend it to the farthest corners of the earth.

What was wrong with this dream with which he inspired his followers? Nothing. Nothing at all. It

is the same dream that has lifted the hopes and strengthened the hearts of most of the great Christian statesmen since the Christian era began. The trouble lay not in the dream but in the means Cromwell adopted to realize it. He chose the sword. He attempted to bring in the Kingdom of God by violence and without waiting for the slow processes of growth. It does not seem to come that way. Neither men nor nations can be hurried into righteousness by compulsion. Something stronger than armies and navies is needed to conquer humanity's inner devils of greed and will-to-power and to make men *want* to be just. "Not by might . . . . but by my Spirit," saith the Lord. Cromwell put his trust in force. He reincarnated the spirits of the old Hebrew captains of the Lord of Hosts—Joshua, Saul, David, and Jehu. He was probably greater than any of them, but he succeeded no better than they in establishing the Kingdom of God. That Kingdom, Jesus taught, comes not by violence. It grows like leaven from within. Cromwell established a military and commercial empire, not the spiritual one he sought. His means determined his end. His own realization of this filled his last days with tragedy and his heroic heart with grief.

JOHN MILTON

1608-1674

JOHN MILTON was a giant in his day. But many of his contemporaries thought him a giant of evil —a veritable ogre. When Winstanley, in 1687, published his *Lives of the Most Famous English Poets,* he gave but grudging account of the author of *Paradise Lost:*

John Milton was one whose natural parts might deservedly give him a place amongst the principal of our English Poets, having written two Heroick Poems and a Tragedy; namely, Paradise Lost, Paradise Regained, and Samson Agonistes. But his fame is gone out like a candle in a snuff, and his memory will always stink, which might have lived in honourable repute, had he not been a notorious trayter, and most impiously and villainously bely'd that blessed martyr, King Charles the First.

That account accurately reflected the judgment of many who had fought on the opposite side in a struggle which engaged Milton's energies for twenty years. It

was a long and bitter struggle, and much of it—that against tyranny and dictatorship—is being re-enacted in our own day. It may be worth while to review it briefly through the life of the man who played the leading literary rôle and whose pen proved mightier than a sword.

Heredity. Born in London on December 9, 1608, Milton came of liberty-loving stock. His grandfather, Richard Milton, a native of Oxfordshire, was a Roman Catholic. In 1601 he had been fined sixty pounds for not attending the Established Church. The fine did not succeed in its purpose, nor did its renewal a few months later. It only confirmed and intensified his resistance. He clung to his Catholicism the more for having paid dearly for it. So staunch a Catholic did he become that when he discovered his son John, the poet's father, reading an English Bible, he disowned him and drove him from home, for the English Bible in those days was regarded as a Protestant book and proscribed by the Roman Catholic Church. Warfare between Catholics and Protestants was bitter and bloody and no quarter given. In the case of the Miltons, this warfare seems to have been more on grounds of personal liberty than of theology. Richard Milton wanted freedom to worship as a Catholic; his son wanted the same freedom to worship as a Protestant. Both wanted independence, and both resisted coercion.

The disinherited son went to London and became a

writer and composer. Some of his songs, especially certain madrigals, gained popularity, and he prospered —prospered so well that he was able to buy a house in London and another one in the country. A cultured man, a lover of freedom and art, he cared more for these—and for his quiet—than for making money; so when he had obtained a sufficient competence for himself and his children, he retired, still in middle age, to his country home, where he could devote the rest of his days to music.

The poet's mother was Sarah Jeffrey, a member of the ancient family of Bradshaws, originally from Wales. She is barely mentioned by the biographers, but they speak of her as a "prudent, virtuous wife" and as "a woman of incomparable goodness," exemplary in her liberality to the poor. She had weak eyes and wore spectacles after she was thirty years of age. She bore her husband six children, three dying in infancy. The surviving ones were John, the eldest, Christopher, who became a lawyer and a Catholic, and Anne, who married a man named Phillips and died after bearing him two sons, Edward and John.

These parents belong among the great parents of all time. Their home combined the moral earnestness of Puritanism with the cultural breadth of the Renaissance. It emphasized right conduct and personal dignity and at the same time stimulated in the children a desire for a well-rounded life: music and Shakespeare as well as goodness. It was a prototype of the later homes of

John Ruskin and Matthew Arnold. No son was ever surrounded with more understanding and faith and encouragement than young John Milton. His father, perceiving the limitations of his own literary talent, modestly ceased to force his own Muse and transferred his ambitions to the son. At the age of ten, young John began to write poetry, and thereafter the family regarded him as a genius and brought him up as one. The father gave the son the best tutors he could find. He grudged no sacrifice that would add to the boy's training and the development of his character and ability. Together, father and mother instilled into him a passion for knowledge that eventually made him one of the most erudite of all poets. Along with this passion for learning they taught him to appreciate the benefits of travel, human companionship, and culture in all its forms. From his early years John Milton formed the habit of thinking of himself as a great man, destined for great works. There have been many men who have suffered delusions of grandeur but few who, without conceit, knew that grandeur *was* their own. Milton was one of these few.

Schooling. At eleven he entered St. Paul's School, London. Even at that age he studied until midnight nearly every night. Considering the inadequate lighting of those days, it is no wonder that he strained his eyes and had frequent headaches. He made incredible progress, outstripping by far the requirements of his instructors. When he left the school at fifteen he had

mastered—not simply acquired—French, Italian, Latin, Spanish, Greek, and Hebrew. He had composed various poems and had paraphrased in verse some of the Psalms. And he had made a lasting friendship with Charles Diodati, a comrade with whom he shared the best of his mind and heart in the years following.

At sixteen he entered Christ's College, Cambridge, and here encountered the first severe opposition of his young life. His fellow students did not take kindly to his superior erudition. Nor did they relish his assumption of greatness. They dubbed him "The Lady of Christ's College," partly because of his fair complexion and delicacy of feature and partly because of the purity of his life and the sensitiveness of his nature. He let them have their fun and plunged more deeply into his studies. For seven years he labored with an industry that knew no lagging. He made himself as much at home in the fifth century B.C. and the first and twelfth centuries A.D. as he was in the seventeenth. He felt that he must know as much about the history of Europe as of England. He would not be confined to any century or to any country. The Cosmos was his home, Eternity his age. Even at nineteen, in a college exercise, he voiced his yearning to soar

> Above the wheeling poles, and at Heaven's door
> Look in, and see each blissful deity
> How he before the thunderous throne doth lie,
> Listening to what unshorn Apollo sings. . . . .

Yet the university system of instruction irked him. He was placed under a tutor, William Chappell, described as "a man of dry, meagre nature." He quarreled with Chappell and for a short time suffered suspension from the university. He was soon restored to good standing, however, and took his Bachelor of Arts degree in 1629 and his Master of Arts in 1632. And by the time he was graduated he had won the affection as well as the admiration of both students and faculty.

These adolescent years saw the blossoming of his emotional life along with his intellectual. He enjoyed the theater and went duly into raptures over pretty girls. At twenty he fell violently in love—he thought —with one girl whose face he had seen in a crowd. He wrote a poem in Latin to her, although he did not know her name and never saw her again after that fleeting glimpse. Later he met a girl of Italian descent with whose encouragement he composed sonnets in Italian, she having told him, "It is the language of love." Nothing came of this attachment. Next he extended his affections to Mother Nature and wrote both verse and prose in praise of her fecundity. He sang it later in "Comus" and more fully in the Creation Book of *Paradise Lost.*

Although the emotions of youth surged within him, he appears never to have lost mastery of himself. He was chaste—and proud of it. In a letter to his friend Diodati he speaks of "shunning far on my path false Circe's infamous mansions." His chastity was not

rooted in priggishness, nor in fear, nor in religion in the conventional sense. Rather, it sprang from his determination to sublimate his creative powers, to cherish them for the higher adventures in the great writing he felt destined to produce.

Chastity, industry, and scholarship were not the only characteristics that distinguished him at Cambridge. He made himself companionable by being interested in his fellows. They found his conversation lively, his manners courtly. He respected the dignity of others and never lost his own. He loved justice and practiced it. He had a complete disregard for riches and titles and sought his friends among those whose minds he admired, irrespective of their wealth or social position. Temperate, clean, and cheerful, he lived simply, even frugally, and enjoyed the flavor of life without draining its dregs.

Aside from Latin essays and minor verses in English, he had already produced two significant poems: a fine appreciation of Shakespeare, whose death had occurred only a few years before, and the long "Hymn on the Morning of Christ's Nativity." This hymn discloses beauty and soaring imagination as well as breadth of learning and religious feeling. Against a background of utter peace and quiet we hear the heavenly music as it greeted the shepherds, and we perceive the doom thereby portended for "th' Old Dragon underground" and all oracles and false gods.

Purpose. As Milton at twenty-three received the coveted degree of Master of Arts, he faced a great

choice. Should he devote his genius to further literary labors or should he enter the church? His Puritan home, his moral earnestness, his idealism, his purity of life, his interest in things of the spirit, and his learning—the latter probably unequaled by any man of his years—all seemed to point toward the ministry. But as he looked on the church he saw in it a disposition to exercise a tyranny over the mind. He could not stand tyranny of any kind. So he decided against it. To the everlasting credit of his parents they exerted no pressure upon him. The bonds of sympathy and understanding, especially between father and son, were very strong. What, then, would the young scholar do? He would write poetry. He would summon all his powers and concentrate them with intense determination upon the production of a quality of poetry that England had not yet seen. "Very well," said his father, "come home and write." So Milton went home and began to write.

In the quiet of English country life in the home at Horton, Milton spent the next five years. In these years he wrote "Sonnet to the Nightingale," "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Arcades," "Comus," and "Lycidas." These poems fill less than seventy pages in the volume that contains all his poetic works. Not much quantity for five years' labor. But two things must be said. First, the quality of at least three of them—"L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," and "Comus"—has made them immortal. Other poets have written a hundred times as much in the same amount of time

and seen their work vanish into forgetfulness before the decade passed. Second, Milton was in no haste. He was growing his wings. As he wrote to Diodati, ". . . . my Pegasus has not yet feathers enough to soar aloft in the fields of air." He thought he had ahead of him years of undisturbed tranquillity during which he might compose the great epic that was slowly taking form in his mind. He was already considering themes and characters for it, choosing and rejecting, and then selecting new ones, and planning the majestic scope and sweep of it. Such a project could not, must not, be hurried. Perhaps it was just as well that he could not see ahead the years of political struggle—years that would sap his strength and rob him of his sight, while they drafted his pen into the service of a long and bloody conflict.

Foremost in his daily routine was prayer—"devout prayer to the Holy Spirit, that can enrich with all utterance and knowledge, and send out his Seraphim with the hallowed fire of his altar, to touch and purify the lips of whom he pleases." After his morning prayer he devoted the bulk of each day to study. He read the classics of seven languages, including their philosophy, metaphysics, and theology, as well as their general literature. Modern scholars have traced the sources of Milton's major philosophical concepts not only to the Bible, which he knew in its original tongues, but to Plato, Augustine, and especially to the Kabbalah, the secret science of Jewish rabbis interpreting the

Pentateuch.[1] His knowledge of all these was profound. Yet his days were not lived entirely in seclusion. He lived no monk's life. He made occasional journeys to London to see plays, listen to concerts, buy new books, and meet his old friends from Cambridge. He cultivated his musical ear and developed a "tunable voice." He enjoyed playing the organ. He had a curious fondness for mathematics and sought out instructors and watched every advance in this science. And he kept up his friendship with Charles Diodati, writing to him, and visiting him whenever he could.

The search after the higher values, the pursuit of an all-round culture of the spirit, dominate the poems of these years. Twentieth-century readers, prone to the superficial judgment that Milton was a "narrow-minded Puritan," would do well to read again "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." They will find nothing narrow-minded or Puritanical there. Both poems deal with the fullness of life, "L'Allegro" from the viewpoint of the merry mind, "Il Penseroso" from that of the meditative mind. What is there narrow about this typical passage from "L'Allegro":

> Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
> Jest and youthful jollity,

[1] Saurat traces the origin of certain of Milton's fundamental ideas in *Paradise Lost* to a thirteenth-century book, the *Zohar*, which had great influence on many writers of the Renaissance. It was a compendium of non-orthodox Jewish traditions. Some of the parallels between the *Zohar* and *Paradise Lost* are very striking.

Quips, and cranks, and wanton wiles,
Nods, and becks, and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled care derides,
And laughter holding both his sides.
Come, and trip it as you go
On the light fantastic toe,
And in thy right hand lead with thee,
The mountain nymph, sweet Liberty. . . .

And what is Puritanical in these lines from "Il Penseroso":

And when the sun begins to fling
His flaring beams, me, goddess, bring
To arched walks of twilight groves,
And shadows brown, that Sylvan loves. . . .
There in close covert by some brook,
Where no profaner eye may look,
Hide me from day's garish eye,
While the bee with honeyed thigh,
That at her flowery work doth sing,
And the waters murmuring,
With such consort as they keep,
Entice the dewy-feathered sleep; . . .
And as I wake, sweet music breathe
Above, about, or underneath,
Sent by some spirit to mortals good,
Or the unseen genius of the wood.

"Comus" is a masque whose theme is the conflict between sensuality and self-control. It begins with these majestic lines of the Attendant Spirit:

Before the starry threshold of Jove's court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live insphered
In regions mild of calm and serene air,
Above the smoke and stir of this dim spot,
Which men call Earth; and with low-thoughted care
Confined, and pestered in this pinfold here,
Strive to keep up a frail and feverish being,
Unmindful of the crown that virtue gives,
After this mortal change to her true servants,
Amongst the enthroned gods on sainted seats.

It goes on to tell dramatically the story of a virgin lost from her two brothers in a forest. She meets Comus, a mythical character who is able by means of a certain oriental liquor to transform human beings into creatures with human bodies but with the heads and uncontrolled appetites of beasts. Pretending that he can lead her to a place of safety, he entices her into the palace where his other victims are banqueting and ready to turn the place into a sensual sty. He endeavors to seduce her and makes a brilliant speech in praise of the fecundity of Nature and of the pleasures of sensuality. But her chastity gives her an intuitive power to see through his cunning. Unable to seduce her, Comus casts a spell upon her, fixing her upon a stone seat so that she cannot move. But her brothers arrive and with the aid of Sabrina, another mythological character, break the spell and free her. The poem concludes in the words of the helping Spirit:

Mortals, that would follow me,
Love Virtue; she alone is free:
She can teach ye how to climb
Higher than the sphery chime;
Or, if Virtue feeble were,
Heaven itself would stoop to her.

"Love Virtue; she alone is free"—in that brief line Milton sums up his values at the age of twenty-six. Man will find his freedom only as he attains self-mastery and pursues the true, the beautiful, and the good. It is the same concept that permeates Matthew Arnold's *Culture and Anarchy*. With the publication of "Comus" it was evident that a great poet was rising in England. No one else was writing with such elevation of thought combined with discipline of sentiment and grace of utterance.

Travel. But Milton was still not ready to fly. The death of his mother filled him with grief, and he wanted to get away from the familiar scenes. He thought he needed the culture of travel. His father, always generous, found the means, and Milton set out for a fifteen months' pilgrimage through Europe. Most of his time he spent in Italy where the climate as well as the traditions of poetry and the great collections of painting and sculpture ministered to his hungry spirit. He made friends with the choicest intellects of Florence, Rome, Naples, Venice, and Milan. His Protestantism was frequently a handicap; yet he was at no pains to conceal his convictions—rather he enjoyed discussing

them with kindred minds. And they, in turn, welcomed his clear thinking and admired his learning, even though they disagreed with his position. Years afterward when Italian, French, and Swiss scholars came to London they sought out principally two men—Oliver Cromwell and John Milton. To know these men was to know the leaven that was working in political and religious thought in England. Before he returned, Milton visited Galileo, now old and blind. The meeting of these two men, the one who had given his eyesight and suffered persecution for truth as he had discovered it, and the other who would eventually make the same sacrifices, must stir the imagination of all. During Milton's absence, his dear friend Diodati had died. His passionate grief found expression in "Epitaphium Damonis," a noble outburst of personal sorrow, too little known because in Latin.

Revolution. Meanwhile in England revolution was brewing. Milton's own convictions about the necessity of human freedom were drawing him irresistibly into the conflict. His country had divided into two opposing camps—the Puritans, who wanted to purify both state and religion of all tyranny and corruption, and the party of the King and Archbishop Laud, which wanted to maintain the traditional authorities of crown and church. The Puritans, whose spiritual roots went back to the Reformation, had grown steadily in power and influence since the time of Queen Elizabeth. They had become a people of one book—the Bible. They read it daily, in the family circle as well as in church. They

discussed it from cover to cover, for they found their own spiritual history in that of the Jews and of the early Christians. As a result they developed certain great convictions: that the Eternal God was their leader; that He wanted men to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with Him; that He was calling them to a new Way of Life as exemplified by Jesus, a Way that demanded the mastery of the soul over the flesh and the sacrifice of the comfort of the individual for the redemption of the many; and, finally, that every form of tyranny, whether of sin or ignorance or political or ecclesiastical domination which came between man and God, was wrong and must not be tolerated. Milton naturally found himself in sympathy with this group.

But all the Puritans were not of this ideal variety. As the party grew in numbers it came to include thousands of lesser minds who mistook their opinions for God's truth. Among such minds fanaticism, hypocrisy, and even cruelty flourished. With these Milton must eventually come into conflict.

The party of the King and Archbishop Laud, on the other hand, presented no stern demands on either morals or intellect. It stood for toleration. So long as a citizen obeyed king and church he could act and think as he pleased. Milton was not without sympathy with the idea of toleration. He was too well read in the cultures and religions of other countries and other centuries to be intolerant. Therefore, he did not plunge at once into the fray upon his return from his European travels.

He began the more prosaic task of tutoring his nephews, John and Edward Phillips, whom he took into his own home at the death of his sister Anne. To these he added several other students. He taught them after an original plan that made basic the classics of many languages. He began, also, to work out various tentative schemes of the great epic he wanted to write. His notebook contains references to ninety-nine possible themes, sixty-one of them dealing with scriptural material and thirty-eight with British history.

But the political struggle grew more intense, and Milton could not keep out of it. The king, Charles I, forgetting his gospel of tolerance, waged two stupid and disastrous wars in an effort to force bishops upon Presbyterian Scotland. The English Puritans, fearing that such a king would bring back upon them the domination of the Roman Catholic Church, rose in rebellion. Bankrupt, Charles was forced to call the Long Parliament. He rallied the Established Church to his aid.

Milton now threw himself into the conflict. He was not ignorant of its cost to him. It would be a long struggle. He would not be able to write poetry through days of tranquillity in a country home. But, after all, his purpose was one with the Puritans. They wanted to bring in the Kingdom of God, reorganizing the country in harmony with His will. That was what Milton wanted. He had planned to further that end through great poetry. They sought it by political organization and revolution. But it was the same end. Milton wrote:

Perceiving that the true way to liberty followed on from these beginnings [referring to the demands of the Puritans upon the king], inasmuch also as I had prepared myself from my youth that, above all things, I could not be ignorant what is of Divine and what of human right, I resolved, though I was then meditating other matters, to transfer into this struggle all my genius and all the strength of my industry.

For twenty years unbroken by any return to poetry, except for brief and insignificant excursions, Milton devoted himself to the Puritan cause. He was not a hundred per cent Puritan himself; he never was. He was much too broad-gauged for that. He was, as Garnett puts it, "a most free and independent thinker, the vast sweep of whose thought happened to coincide for a while with the narrow orbit of so-called Puritanism." Probably no man ever entered public life with nobler motives. He wanted no office, no glory for himself. He wanted to free his country from corruption, injustice, and tyranny and to establish in their place a new social order in which righteousness, justice, and liberty would prevail. That was the Puritan goal as he saw it. He knew that he was not at his best in writing prose polemics. He would have to write them "with his left hand." But no one else was half as good. And the Puritans sorely needed someone who could not only inveigh intelligently against the evils of the day but who could make their own high purposes clear and persuasive to the public. To Milton that need was the call of God, and he bowed his own will in submission.

"When God commands to take the trumpet, and blow a dolorous or jarring blast, it lies not in man's will what he shall say, or what he shall conceal. . . ."

So this brilliant young genius put aside his beloved poetry, cast away his ambition for companionship with the Muses, took up his trumpet, and blew blast after blast for God. Undoubtedly he believed that God would be victorious in the struggle and would ultimately allow him to sing again, but the immediate need was for a trumpeter, not a singer. Milton would trumpet and trust God for the future.

Political Pamphleteer. In so brief a sketch of his life we cannot describe in detail the battles in which he trumpeted for the armies of the Lord. We can but let them pass in quick review before us.

First he threw himself into the fight for the freedom of the church and against its control by bishops. In a series of pamphlets he argued against certain revolutionary projects of the Parliament which would bring the English people more and more under the domination of the bishops. He insisted that no true reformation could be accomplished along that road. In fact, it was the bishops themselves who were the real stumbling blocks to reformation because of their ambition and will-to-power. They were too earth-bound themselves and too puny in their conception of God to be trusted with any more power. They made God in their own image and then hallowed the image, "sprinkled it and bedecked it, not in robes of pure innocency, but of

pure linen, with . . . fantastic dresses, in palls and mitres, gold and gewgaws fetched from Aaron's old wardrobe. . . ." [2]

He compared the relation of the clergy and the state to that of a huge wen on a man's head. Should the wen be allowed to take on the functions of the head in the control of the other members of the body? When the bishops replied to his strictures, Milton answered them even more violently, ridiculing their arguments and heaping scorn upon their persons. His language is as filled with invective as that of any modern politician speaking from a sound truck in the heat of a bitter campaign.

In these first diatribes against the bishops, Milton fights on the side of the Presbyterians. Nor does he question yet the sanctity of the king. He thinks the king needs to be saved from the prelates. He likens him to the mighty Samson and the prelates to Delilah, who will rob him of his strength. The vision of England reformed into a Kingdom of God is yet unclouded. She needs only freedom from ecclesiastical bondage. Popery had been banished; now let the prelates be hurled after the papists—then true religion could do its perfect work in establishing an ideal social order. Under that order individuals would develop a new spiritual stature, master their passions by free intellects, and bring all things under subjection to the God of truth and justice. It was a theocracy Milton wanted, and he

[2] *Prose Work*, II, 365.

did not doubt that God also wanted it. He saw himself as God's herald, and now and then as God's avenging angel, bringing down from heaven fire upon the heads of His enemies.

But now came an event in his own life that dealt a blow to his sense of cosmic importance. It was his marriage to Mary Powell and her early desertion of him. It seems that a part of Milton's income for the last sixteen years had come from interest on a debt of five hundred pounds which one Richard Powell, an Oxfordshire squire and a Royalist, had owed to Milton's father. During the civil war Powell had defaulted in the interest payments. In the spring of 1643 Milton journeyed to Powell's home in an effort to collect payment. Just what happened, or how, is a matter of conjecture, but a month later Milton was back in London with Powell's seventeen-year-old daughter as his bride, and a coterie of her relatives who made merry in his home for several days. Neither the debt nor the dowry was ever paid, and young Mary deserted Milton after a month. She left him ostensibly on a visit to her mother, but the days lengthened into weeks and the weeks into months, and she did not return. Milton wrote her many letters. She answered none of them. He sent a messenger to her, but he came back with no answer.

What had gone wrong? Edward Phillips cites the fact that she had been reared in a home where much company and joviality had accustomed her to noisy gaiety, and she probably could not adjust herself to the

studious quiet of Milton's house. Certainly she was no intellectual match for the poet, and she was only half his age. Saurat goes rather carefully into the circumstances and gathers considerable evidence to support the following explanation: (1) that Milton had married under the impetus of a "swelling urge of physical passion," (2) that after marriage Mary had refused herself to him because, in Milton's own phrase in his later pamphlet on divorce, he "hasted to light the nuptial torch," and (3) that the resultant sense of frustration and incompatibility made life together unbearable. They were linked neither in body nor in spirit.

Whatever the cause, the break hurt Milton's sensitive soul as nothing else had done. His pride suffered a wound from which it could not soon recover. He, a genius, a poet of the first rank, a leader of the cause of righteousness in private and in public life, a singer of the beauty of love and the power of chastity—he had been weighed in the balance by a seventeen-year-old girl and found wanting. He who had controlled his own passion through youth and young manhood and brought to his bride a body both vigorous and chaste now found himself rejected and deserted.

In the acute pain of his spirit he wrote a new pamphlet—*The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce.* He had contemplated writing something on this theme before his marriage, but now the agony of his own experience forced him to think it out and to relate it to his conceptions of love and sensuality, of reason and

passion. In this pamphlet and succeeding ones on the same subject, he appeals to Parliament to reconsider the laws of the country concerning marriage and divorce. He examines the reasons for marriage and for sexual intercourse in marriage and holds that rightly used such intercourse is normal and healthful for both body and spirit. He emphasizes the difference between love and lust and insists that the high purpose of marriage cannot be fulfilled between a man and a woman until their hopes and ideals, their aspirations and purposes, coalesce. Where such coalescence is impossible, their physical union is but a brutish congress and their marriage no real marriage but only "two carcasses chained unnaturally together." It were better for both and for the state that such a marriage be dissolved and a divorce granted.

These pamphlets circulated throughout England and far exceeded in sale the first volume of Milton's poems (containing "L'Allegro," "Il Penseroso," "Comus," and "Lycidas") published about the same time. His views on marriage and divorce aroused heated debates but changed no laws. They succeeded apparently in nothing but turning the Presbyterians against Milton.

Not once in all the divorce pamphlets does Milton mention his own bitter experience; he was much too dignified and too proud for that. Nor was he trying to change the laws of England simply to justify a divorce which he wanted for himself. Rather, he wanted to save thousands of other lives from the wreck which

he saw was the inevitable outcome of marriage of incompatible minds. The Kingdom of Heaven for which he labored had as its basic unit heavenly families. No kingdom of a divine pattern could be founded on homes rent by dis-union or held together only by legalized passion. Paradise would be lost that way. Paradise could be regained only when love reasserted control over passion and made it subservient to the high purposes of God.

Fully expecting that someday the divorce laws would be liberalized and that he—and others—could try to regain Paradise, Milton meanwhile pursued the task he had undertaken before his marriage—tutoring his nephews and others. This was partly a work of necessity, for his income had been reduced by the confusion of the times. But he lived frugally and thought nobly and every few months issued a new pamphlet in reply to his opponents.

All this occupied his time, but it did not appease his hunger for a wife and the completeness of a real home with children of his own. In 1645, about two years after Mary Powell had left him, he began to pay court to a young gentlewoman. Whether or not he would have defied the laws which he had been unable to change is a matter of conjecture, but before the issue had come to the point of decision, he was confronted with a new situation.

Visiting one day in the home of a relative, he was brought face to face with Mary Powell whom he had

never expected to see again. On her knees she begged him to forgive her and to take her back. In two of his later poems he described a similar scene. In *Samson Agonistes* Delilah returns to the husband she had betrayed and seeks reunion. But Samson refuses, crying, "Out, out, hyaena!" In the tenth book of *Paradise Lost,* however, when Eve humbles herself and begs forgiveness, her "lowly plight"

> . . . in Adam wrought
> Commiseration; . . .
> As one disarmed, his anger he all lost,
> And thus with peaceful words upraised her soon.

Milton took the Adam course. And here some questions naturally arise. Had she become compatible intellectually with him? Or was it only that she would now be submissive physically? She could hardly have gained much in culture living in the noisy home of her father during these years. Was Milton being chivalrous, or did he care enough for her to think they could yet establish that ideal home of which he had written? Or was the crafty hand of old Richard Powell in Mary's return? Certain it is that the Royalist cause was on the decline and with it the Powell fortunes. Moreover, hardly a year later we find the entire Powell household —father, mother, and several sons and daughters— quartered upon Milton, along with his own aged father and his students. "Whether by accident or the tie of law," wrote the poet to a friend, "they are the persons who sit daily in my company, weary me, nay by heaven,

almost plague me to death whenever they are jointly in the humour for it." This harassing situation lasted for a year or more until father Powell died in 1647 and father Milton two months later. After that, Milton cleared the house of the other Powells and the students, took a smaller house, and settled down to the business of trying to make a real home with Mary. She had borne him their first child, a daughter, in July, 1646. In the years that followed she bore him a son and two more daughters. She died in 1652, and the son on whom Milton had set his heart and his hopes died a few weeks later. After a decent interval he married again, but his second wife died in childbirth. Her child died with her, and Milton was left with the three daughters of Mary Powell. The oldest was lame and suffered other bodily infirmities, including an impediment in her speech. There is no record that the home was a happy one, and not a line in Milton indicates that he counted it as even approaching the ideal he had dreamed and desired. His experience with reality in the years since the idealistic days of his youth had cost him his faith in the Established Church and to a considerable extent in human nature, especially in woman. Possibly his faith in himself was shaken. But he still believed in the masses and in the possibility of a Kingdom of God on earth. And he was still God's herald.

To return to his trumpeting, as we have seen, a storm of vituperation had burst upon his head with the publication of his pamphlets on divorce. Instead of being

hailed as a great reformer, he was denounced as one who preached a lowering of moral standards. The Presbyterians, now dominant, although not a majority in the state, railed at him from pulpit and press. He in turn discovered that Presbyterian churchmen in control of civil and political affairs were no better—were even worse—than their predecessors, the bishops. "New Presbyter was but old priest writ large."

Parliament, under pressure from the Presbyterians, had passed in 1643 an ordinance limiting the freedom of the press. It assumed that all "scandalous, seditious, libelous, and unlicensed papers, pamphlets or books" had no right to exist; they must be censored. Boards of licensers were set up for various classes of publications. For example, one John Booker, an astrologist, was made licenser for all works on astrology. He promptly censored, by refusing to license, the works of his rival, a man by the name of Lilly. A board of twelve licensers, all ministers, was established to pass on all books of a religious nature. This board did not approve Milton's pamphlets on divorce. Milton published them without its approval. The board had Milton cited to Parliament. The latter body was too busy with other matters to try the case and did as such bodies usually do—referred it to a committee, where it died.

But Milton's ire was up. Without waiting for action of Parliament, he wrote and published—without license—his *Areopagitica; a Speech for the Liberty of Unlicensed Printing*. This is by far the best known of

his prose writings and one of the few whose subject matter now is not largely obsolete. In fact, since the rise of Fascism and of dictators, it is probably more timely today than ever before. In it he contended that the act passed by Parliament was dangerous, possibly fatal, to the liberties of a free people; that its origin was not, as the Presbyterians professed, an attempt to eliminate immoral writings, but rather to suppress the human spirit in its search for freedom; that as such it was a vestige of the days of papal authority from which England had emancipated herself; that it would destroy not the bad books but the good ones, for it would prevent liberal minds from giving free expression to their thoughts whenever they were not orthodox; and, finally, that the "sense of independence and responsibility essential to a manly and fruitful literature" would be stifled.

Parliament did not rescind the act, but what matter? Milton stirred up a public opinion so strong that the administrators of the law had to liberalize it in practice. He prevented it from becoming a weapon of tyranny or an instrument of what we know today as "opinion-control." But the age-old battle for the freedom of the press against censorship is never ended. In these stirring modern times hardly a day goes by but some newspaper quotes Milton's arguments. His trumpet still sounds.

The years 1645 to 1649 were silent years for Milton except for a tract on Education and a few minor poems.

Torn by Civil War, the English were fighting rather than thinking. In January, 1649, the head of Charles I rolled from the block. Within two weeks Milton published a pamphlet justifying his execution. He entitled it *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates.* The follies of Charles had convinced him that a king had no special guidance from God and, therefore, no exemption from the laws and penalties of God's justice. He argued that political evil was but another form of the triumph of passion over reason and as such was not to be tolerated. It was the right, nay the duty, of the English people to free themselves from such a monarch.

The Commonwealth as now established obviously needed the further services of such an able supporter. In 1649 Milton was assigned the post of Secretary for Foreign Languages. His duties included corresponding (usually in Latin) with foreign governments on matters of international policy, attending upon diplomats from those countries, and generally impressing the peoples of Europe with the high aims and purposes of the Republic. At home he was to educate the masses of the English people in their responsibilities as citizens of a country now freed—at least for the moment—from both bishops and kings. His labors supplemented those of Cromwell, who in 1649-52 was forced to quell uprisings in Ireland and Scotland. Pen and sword cooperated.

One of the first tasks given Milton by the Council of State was to prepare an answer to a French book by a noted scholar, Claudius Salmasius. Salmasius

had written a vindication of the reign of Charles I and of the divine right of kings. Milton accepted the commission, in spite of the fact that he had already lost the sight of one eye and had been warned by physicians that he would lose his other eye if he did not give it rest and treatment. "The choice lay before me," he afterward wrote, "between dereliction of a supreme duty and loss of eyesight; in such a case I could not listen to a physician; . . . I could not but obey that inward monitor, I know not what, that spoke to me from heaven."

He entitled his reply to Salmasius (1651) *A Defense of the English People* and based it upon the thesis that God wants his people free, that He had always been on the side of liberty, emancipating the Hebrews from bondage and sending Christ into the world to demonstrate and confirm our liberties. He concluded with an appeal to the English people, an appeal that indicates that he is not so sure as he had been formerly that they are actually going to establish the Kingdom of God on earth now that they are freed from bishops and king. They *can* do so, but they may fail. Then woe!

The Royalist party replied to Milton with a pamphlet devoted almost entirely to a personal attack upon him. He then wrote his *Second Defense,* published in May, 1654, a few months after Cromwell's formal sovereignty under the title of Protector had begun. Not only does this *Second Defense* display Milton's power of savage invective and his lofty estimate of Crom-

well, but it discloses the basic philosophy of Milton's own political position. Men cannot regain their unity with God until they are free from the domination of all tyrants. That freedom is not simply an external, political thing; even more, it is an inner freedom from sensuality and love of riches. This can be achieved only by the determination of men to let reason, not passion, rule their lives. . . .

. . . And unless that liberty which is of such a kind as arms can neither procure nor take away, which alone is the fruit of piety, of justice, of temperance, and unadulterated virtue, shall have taken deep root in your minds and hearts, there will not long be wanting one who will snatch from you by treachery what you have acquired by arms.

. . . Unless you will subjugate the propensity to avarice, to ambition, and sensuality, and expel all luxury from yourselves and from your families, you will find that you have cherished a more stubborn and intractable despot at home, than you ever encountered in the field.

. . . You, therefore, who wish to remain free, . . . learn obedience to reason and the government of yourselves, and finally bid adieu to your dissensions, your jealousies, your superstitions, your outrages, your rapine, and your lusts.[3]

This book went through five editions and two foreign translations in a few months. It made Milton's name throughout Europe famous among commoners, infamous among kings. Copies of it were confiscated

[3] *Prose Works,* I, 295-99.

by the Diet of Ratisbon and burned by the magistrates of Paris. But distinguished popular leaders and literary men from abroad sought out Milton and offered their congratulations. He had given the whole democratic movement a tremendous push forward.

But, as the physicians had prophesied, these driving literary labors had already cost him his remaining eye. From 1652 until his death in 1674 he was totally blind. The year 1652, as we have seen, was the year his wife died and he was left with three small daughters on his hands. Trouble enough for any man. His enemies declared it was all the judgment of God. He answered:

Let the calumniators of God's judgments cease to revile me, and to forge their superstitious dreams about me. Let them be assured that I neither regret my lot nor am ashamed of it, and that I remain unmoved and fixed in my opinion, and that I neither believe nor feel myself an object of God's anger, but actually experience and acknowledge His fatherly mercy and kindness to me in all matters of greatest moment—especially in that I am able, through His consolation and His strengthening of my spirit to acquiesce in His divine will, thinking oftener of what He has bestowed upon me than of what He has withheld. . . .

It is one thing to answer one's enemies; it is another to make one's own inner adjustment to such a calamity as the loss of sight. Milton made that adjustment and in his great sonnet put it in words that have helped thousands since his day to bear affliction with fortitude.

His blindness and his domestic sorrows were not the

greatest of his griefs. The Cause to which he had devoted nearly twenty years of his life was failing. Although Cromwell had saved England from anarchy after the execution of Charles I, the new republic had not achieved the Kingdom of God. Far from it. The country was still torn by factional and religious strife. Trade had fallen off and an economic depression had set in. The Royalists had not vanished when their king was beheaded. After a brief period of silence they began to work quietly upon Parliament, upon the press, upon the church, taking advantage of every mistake, every hesitation, every confusion of the new government. The Anglican clergy worked with them. Parliament compromised, as parliaments usually do. And the masses, also as usual, listened to hear which party would promise them the most.

Milton, while he was at one with Cromwell in most of his early policies, differed radically with him in the matter of the established church. Cromwell, as Lord Protector, felt that he needed the political aid of the church and of its clergy as leaders of the people. He was, therefore, willing that the clergy continue to be supported by state funds. Milton contended that this was to finance treason to the republic and to the Kingdom of God. He wanted the church entirely separated from the state and the clergy free to be paid by voluntary offerings, or not at all. He would use the taxes now spent for clergymen's salaries to build schools and libraries. A century and a quarter later in America,

when the same struggle was on, Thomas Jefferson led the forces for disestablishment and won. Milton, with greater odds against him, failed. Cromwell stood by the established church—state pay with state control.

Cromwell died in 1658. His son, Richard, succeeded him but lacked his father's strength. The Royalists and the clergy pressed more openly their propaganda for the restoration of the monarchy. Milton, who had been working on a Latin thesaurus and a theological volume, *The Body of Divinity,* interrupted this work and issued two new pamphlets. The first set forth that it was "not lawful for any power on earth to compel in matters of religion." He held that such compulsion was opposed to the true liberty which Christ had brought. The second he called *Considerations Touching the Likeliest Means to Remove Hirelings from the Church*—the "likeliest means" being to stop paying their salaries out of state funds. Both arguments fell on deaf ears, except for the clergy, who only increased their bitter denunciations of him. He apparently expected this result, for in the second he wrote, "If I be not heard or believed, the event will bear me witness to have spoken the truth: And I in the meanwhile have borne my witness, not out of season, to the church and to the country." [4]

The Lost Cause. The republic was crumbling. But he would trumpet while there was a soldier left to hear him. In January, 1660, he blew his final blast in be-

[4] *Prose Works,* III, 41.

half of political liberty. It was a pamphlet in which he pleaded with the English people to maintain their free commonwealth, to correct its weaknesses, and not again to allow themselves to come under the domination of a king. He acknowledged the limitations of the system they had experimented with, but insisted that the remedy lay in more experimentation and in popular education in political science, always keeping the power in the hands of the people. He proposed a Council of State, elected for life, and, as a check upon it, a provincial council in each county, to handle all local administration of justice.

But neither Milton's clear vision nor his heroic appeal could stop the rising tide of reaction. The people were tired of governing themselves, tired of their own factions and the stress and strain of political strife. They wanted to delegate the whole troublesome business to someone else. The Royalists promised everything for nothing—except the surrender of their liberties. Well, what of it? Unity and order seemed more important than liberty. The masses yielded. In scenes of public rejoicing—church bells pealing, bonfires burning, and popular hysteria not unlike that of Armistice Day at the end of the World War—the monarchy was restored on February 11, 1660. In May Charles II ascended the throne. The republican leaders were sent to the scaffold, or imprisoned, or banished. Milton quitted his house in London and went into hiding in Smithfield.

Picture him there. He is fifty-two years old, blind,

reduced in circumstances, and disillusioned. His friends —those who have survived—are either in prison or in exile. His own works have been burned by the public hangman. A bank in which he had invested two thousand pounds of his savings of these twenty years has failed. He has been deprived of his post, and a warrant for his arrest has been issued. He is in danger of assassination. His Cause is lost. His name and his ideals have been dragged in the dust. Not a single great issue to which he had given his devotion during these twenty years has been successful. The Kingdom of God has not come. Reason has not triumphed over passion in national affairs. Freedom from bishops and kings has had its brief day, but too brief for the slow process of public education to solidify its benefits. His faith in government, in churches, and in human beings has been shaken, almost demolished. And now he must live in seclusion with only his three daughters for companions.

His Daughters. They are small comfort. The oldest is illiterate and deformed; the other two frankly abhor him. They scheme against him and sell his books to the ragpicker. In *Samson Agonistes* he pictures his own plight:

> I dark in light exposed
> To daily fraud, contempt, abuse, and wrong,
> Within doors, or without, still as a fool
> In power of others, never in my own.

Probably no three daughters in history have a worse

name than these three of Milton. That they were undutiful and without affection is beyond question. Yet the fault may not be altogether their own. Their mother, Mary Powell, who had deserted Milton (and returned to him only in her poverty), who had feared him but had never understood or loved him, had probably influenced her children against him from their childhood. Nor is Milton entirely blameless. He had never educated them except to teach the two younger ones how to pronounce Greek, Latin, Italian, and French so that they might read to him. But they did not understand what they read. To them he was the stern, irritable, remote taskmaster, absorbed in his own work in which they had no sympathy. Whatever the explanation, the fact remains: these are his companions. Little wonder that, when a political amnesty grants him his liberty, he marries a third wife, a gentlewoman, Elizabeth Minshull, who, though not his intellectual equal, could at least minister to him ungrudgingly.

Under these conditions Milton now writes the most magnificent and sublimely audacious epic in the English language. An ordinary man would have given up in despair. But Milton is no ordinary man. Two great faiths sustain him: his faith in the ultimate justice of God and his faith in his own powers of expression. Out of these springs his courage to go on. He will write no more of the passing show of politics; he will write of the whole spiritual history of the human race.

He will not seek to interpret the ways of the Puritans; he will seek "to justify the ways of God to man." He will write his epic now, not as he would have done when he first planned it, a starry-eyed young man with a head full of untried idealism, but as a veteran who has faced reality in a long and bitter war, a veteran who has come through it with scars, but not dishonored. His very defeat and disillusionment will safeguard his poem from romantic sentimentalism. They will provide a basis of stern realism which will give it permanence. His faith, his insight, and his unequaled powers of expression will give it an apex in beauty. Thus, out of the ashes of defeat he will erect a new structure, an enduring temple for the human spirit.

Paradise Lost. Our understanding must be clear about this or we shall never appreciate *Paradise Lost.* Milton is not putting behind him his twenty years of warfare on the field of politics as if it had been a mistake. Rather, he is distilling wisdom out of that experience. He has seen that the struggle of these years is but one small engagement in the eternal quest for man's ultimate liberty. When Milton enlisted in that warfare his perspective was limited. He had expected God to work quickly, to establish His kingdom here and now with a mere change in the form of English government. He has learned that God must have more time, that "a thousand years are but a day in his sight." Liberty is more an achievement of the inner spirit than of outer condition, important as the

latter may be. The victory of reason over passion for a people requires a long process of self-discipline. Every battle they fight, whether they win or lose, may contribute to that discipline if they keep before them the issues at stake and their final objective. Milton has fought with them; he knows what they have suffered and lost. He, too, has suffered and lost. He sees that their common failure lies not in the injustice of God but in the frailties of human nature. These frailties, primary among which he counts man's "avarice, ambition and sensuality," are deep-rooted. But man can overcome them. The spirit can dominate the flesh. Such is his philosophy as he turns his sightless eyes inward and settles down to complete the writing of *Paradise Lost.*

A typical day of the years that follow finds him rising before dawn. About four in the morning he has a man read to him out of the Bible in the original Hebrew and Greek. Then he meditates until seven. After breakfast his man or his youngest daughter reads to him in Latin, Italian, French, and Greek until the midday meal. Then after more meditation he is ready to dictate. He says he "is like a cow wanting to be milked." Late in the afternoon he walks for two hours or more in his garden when the weather permits, or sits quietly in a swinging chair when it does not. At the evening meal—a light supper—he has an occasional guest, sometimes a distinguished visitor from abroad, where he is more popular than in England, sometimes

a local friend, the family doctor, his nephews, or John Dryden, the first literary critic of the times. Such guests find him cheerful, witty and satirical, and always yearning for news of the outside world. When no guests are present, he plays the organ for a while and retires about nine o'clock. Often in the middle of the night his genius burns, and he feels the urge to write. Thereupon Deborah is summoned, no matter what the hour, and she takes down his dictation by the light of a candle. (Perhaps Deborah had more of a case against her father than the historians have allowed.) So through five years, each day adds its quota to the immortal lines of his epic. His imagination is most active around the autumn and spring equinoxes, and his writing comes most freely then. Five years for the first draft—then two years more of revising. Thus slowly grows the masterpiece.

We stand upon the threshold of *Paradise Lost*. It is not in our province in this brief biography to enter into it, to explore its grandeur, or to stand awed before its majesty. To attempt to do so in a few pages would be as much a profanation as the typical tourist's twenty-minute visit to the Cathedral of Chartres. We are concerned with the poet rather than with the poem. But at least as we stand at the portal we can listen to the poet's invocation in the opening lines.

Of Man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world, and all our woe,

With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing heavenly Muse, that on the secret top
Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
In the beginning how the Heavens and Earth
Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion hill
Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flowed
Fast by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thy aid to my adventurous song,
That with no middle flight intends to soar
Above the Aonian mount, while it pursues
Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.
And chiefly Thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
Before all temples the upright heart and pure,
Instruct me, for Thou knowest; Thou from the first
Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
Dove-like satst brooding on the vast abyss,
And made it pregnant: what in me is dark
Illumine, what is low raise and support,
That to the height of this great argument
I may assert eternal Providence,
And justify the ways of God to men.

And we can bear our testimony that he who walks within will find in this story of man's fall and suffering and redemption his own experience. He will come to the end of the epic as he comes out of a great cathedral, head uncovered, heart uplifted. He will walk on higher ground and see more distant horizons than he has ever known before.

He will find the soul of Milton there—Milton questioning the meaning of suffering, Milton making a pil-

grimage among the stars to get perspective upon "this dim spot which men call Earth," Milton searching out the destiny of man. In the past thirty years he has compassed in his own spirit more evil, more suffering, than is given to most men, and he has emerged triumphant amid the outer tokens of utter defeat. All that passion and fire of conviction which he had expended so liberally in defense of right as he saw it he now infuses, undiminished in vigor, into this tremendous affirmation of his faith in God's justice without which man is lost in his struggle with the forces of evil. That conviction he has hammered out on the anvil of experience. It has stood the triple test of disillusionment, defeat, and despair. It now gives him reason for eternal hope. His science may be Ptolemaic, his mythology ancient, but his theme is ageless, his expression exalted, and his thought sublime.

Two years elapsed after the completion of the poem before it was published. The first (1665) was the year of the Black Plague in London; the second (1666), the year of the Great Fire. The fire came within a block of Milton's home. When the times began to mend, he signed a contract for publication on these terms: he was to receive five pounds for the first printing of thirteen hundred copies and an additional five pounds after the first three impressions of thirteen hundred copies each had been entirely sold. He actually collected a total of ten pounds and his widow eight

pounds.[5] There was some difficulty in getting the book passed by the public licenser, a man named Thomas Tomkyns, who didn't like the idea of "perplexity" and "fear of change" imputed to monarchs. But his objections were finally overcome, and he permitted his august imprimatur to be placed upon the epic. In time, as Garnett laconically remarks, "Tomkyns' imprimatur would be accounted Tomkyns' impertinence." The first impression of thirteen hundred copies was sold out in twenty months. In that period not a line of advertising and not a single review appeared concerning it. It sold only by word-of-mouth recommendation. But the demand for it mounted steadily until nine impressions were run off, after which Milton issued a second edition, adding the prose "argument" to each book and increasing the number of books from ten to twelve. John Dryden, with Milton's permission, made it into an opera, but in performance it lost its colossal dignity and turned out so nearly a burlesque that the attempt was abandoned.

Later Poems. And now Milton, for the first time in his life, feels the pinch of want. The Great Fire has destroyed the only income-bearing property he still possessed—the old family homestead in Bread Street. He is reduced to genteel poverty. But it does not quench the creative fire within him. He sets to work immediately upon *Paradise Regained,* a work only one-fourth as long

[5] Yet the publisher can hardly be accused of sharp practice. He took an unusual risk in printing a poem of such unprecedented length. Moreover, Milton was and had been quite unpopular since the Restoration.

as *Paradise Lost* and accorded about the same proportion of praise by the critics. He wrote it partly as a result of the suggestion of his Quaker friend Elwood, who had read the manuscript of the longer epic and questioned why he did not follow it with its natural sequel—the story of Paradise found again by the redemptive work of Christ. While the beauty of the later poem, and the grace of line, are equal to the former, it has a less majestic quality of imagination. One cannot but prefer the simple, unadorned narratives of the gospels themselves. Milton was at his best when his invention was uncircumscribed in the creation of his characters.

Next came *Samson Agonistes,* the story of Samson and Delilah done after the manner of a Greek tragedy. It is the English counterpart of *Prometheus Bound* and has an added significance when we remember that to Milton his country was a mighty Samson brought low—betrayed and enslaved by lower passions. Yet just as Samson ultimately rose up and burst his bonds, so England would some day rise and free herself. As poetry, both Wordsworth and Coleridge pronounced it perfect in form.

Before the completion of *Samson Agonistes* Milton was afflicted with gout. What irony that he who had practiced temperance and preached temperance and lived abstemiously should himself be laid low by the disease usually associated in those days with intemperance! But his mind still dominated his body, and he drove it

on to fulfilment of the tasks he had set himself. He completed his Latin grammar, wrote a small text on a method of teaching he had used in earlier days, issued a tract on "True Religion, Heresy, Schism and Toleration," and published his *History of Britain, from the First Traditional Beginning to the Norman Conquest.* He also revised and edited his earlier poems. His last work was a *Treatise on Christian Doctrine* in which he closely examines the Bible, with unquestioning reliance upon its authority, and sets forth its doctrines as he finds them and without reference to the creeds of his own day. It is substantially an apologia for the cause of Christian liberty to which he had devoted his life.

Last Days. He has put his house in order. He has concluded the work he had set out to do. Our last picture of him is of a blind old man sitting serenely "in a grey coarse cloth coat at the door of his house in Bunhill Fields, in warm sunny weather to enjoy the fresh air." Of those who pass him there, probably twenty are ready to curse him for his anti-royalist books to every one who is willing to praise him for his poetry. But he is tranquil. He knows the quality of that poetry and that it will endure long after the passions of politics have subsided. He has fought a good fight, he has kept the faith. Late at night on November 8, 1674, he passed away so quietly that those in the room with him did not know that he had gone. Four days later "all his learned and great friends in London, not without a concourse of the vul-

gar, accompanied his body to the church of St. Giles, near Cripplegate," where he was buried in the chancel beside his father. "Not without a concourse of the vulgar." Were they only curious, or was there among them some vague comprehension that a glory had been in their midst and was now passing—the greatest glory of the world since Shakespeare?

Sources of His Power. And the learned ones, who had at least some faint appreciation of his glory, did they pause to ask whence it came? Probably not. They were too close to him to have perspective. Had they reviewed his life, even as hastily as we have done here, they could hardly have escaped the significance of certain influences which shaped his thought and gave direction to the passion of his spirit: his boyhood home, his breadth of culture, his self-discipline and industry, and his religious faith.

In his home he had received as a heritage from his parents a love of liberty and the sensitivity of an artist. They had taught him the English Bible and to seek first the Kingdom of God and its righteousness. With equal diligence they had developed his æsthetic nature. Deliberately, when they recognized his creative gifts, they had reared him as a literary genius. They had instilled into him the expectation of writing great works, giving him thereby a colossal sense of self-importance which was to prove in later years at once a stumblingblock in his domestic relations and a rock of self-confidence in his public service.

His schooling in the classics of seven languages, his wide travels, and his correspondence with the leaders of thought throughout Europe had broadened his culture so that he was at home in any country and in any century. Though he had a passionate patriotism, he was never provincial. He was a citizen of the world and of the ages.

Early in his youth he had learned habits of self-discipline and industry. Like Leonardo, like Dante, like Goethe, like Jefferson—and he is of the same heroic stature—he learned to budget every minute of his days. No student of his days worked longer hours or set himself more herculean tasks. He brought his body under subjection to his mind, was chaste, and concentrated all his powers on the creative work of his imagination. And when he felt called to sacrifice that work to enlist in the cause of liberty in England, he disciplined himself to make the sacrifice and to persevere in it through twenty years of bitter conflict and persecution.

His religious faith supplied the goal and the sustaining power to pursue it. That faith, much closer to the faith of a liberal Quaker than to that of a seventeenth-century Puritan, was neither orthodox nor conventional. It underwent many changes and some losses. But it was his master, not his servant. The heart of it, which he never lost, was this: God reigns. His justice ultimately triumphs. God created man free. But man, exercising his free will, chose to allow passion to rule him rather than reason. This was man's fall. That

fall was not a historical event only, it is universal. It happens in every man when he permits passion—"avarice, ambition and sensuality"—to dominate him. He thus becomes a slave. God's justice delivers slaves into the hands of tyrants, who are His agents for man's punishment. The tyrant in religion is the prelate, in politics the despot, in intellect the censor. Christ is that part of God in every man which triumphs over passion. Man is redeemed and free again when he chooses to unite himself with Christ—the God in him—and restrain his passions. The Bible is the record of God's justice in dealing with man and of man's long struggle with his passions and with the tyrants. It needs no external authority to interpret it but only the God in each man's soul. If man will listen to that inner authority and obey it, conquer his passions, dethrone the tyrants, and enthrone Christ in his personal life and in his nation, he will be free again. Otherwise he will be enslaved, lost. "Know that to be free is the same thing as to be pious, to be wise, to be temperate and just, to be frugal and abstinent, and lastly to be magnanimous and brave; and it usually happens . . . that that people which cannot govern themselves, and moderate their passions, but crouch under the slavery of their lusts, should be delivered up to the sway of those whom they abhor. . . ." Man's damnation is his slavery. Man's freedom is his salvation. The Kingdom of God is made up of free men and free nations. No tyrant and no slave can belong. To establish that

Kingdom on earth is God's eternal purpose. To work with God to that end is man's highest duty and greatest privilege.

Out of such a home, such a culture, such self-disciplined industry, such a religious faith, came the proud, free, singing soul of John Milton to battle with the tyrants and justify the ways of God to men.

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